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the ROAD TRIP ISSUE

AMAZING SOUTHERN
FRIED CHICKEN
AND OTHER TASTES
TO TRAVEL FOR
P.36

Hit the road for:

CALIFORNIA'S
TACO TRAIL P.60

RUSTIC ITALIAN
PASTA FROM
ABRUZZO P.48

A WOOD-FIRED
FEAST ON THE COAST
OF SOUTH AMERICA P.70



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PORSCHE



THE ROAD TRIP issue

MAY

48 THE ROAD TO ABRUZZO

The ancient shepherding pathways that crisscross the breathtaking, lightly touristed Italian region of Abruzzo lead to fantastic views, incredible wine, and perfectly executed rustic dishes.

By Adam Leith Gollner

60 ON THE CALIFORNIA TACO TRAIL

A road trip down the historic Golden State Highway uncovers some of the most exciting Mexican food one taco maven has ever encountered.

By Sara Deseran

70 AN EATING ADVENTURE IN URUGUAY

Feasting on grilled just-caught fish, crudo, and fresh salads, a New York City chef revels in the community and simple foods of the small beachside town where he got his start.

By Gabe Ulla

Cover photograph by Christina Holmes

A bartender mixes drinks at Bar Arocena in Montevideo, Uruguay, home to the legendary *chivito* sandwich (see page 72 for recipe).

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After devouring Adam Leith Gollner's story about Abruzzo (page 48), head to saveur.com/abruzzo to read about his favorite regional winemaker.

Photographer Melanie Dunea ate at Italy's **highway rest stops** (page 14). See what she learned at saveur.com/rest-stop.

Go to saveur.com/uruguay for an **eye-opening Uruguay itinerary**, plus outtakes from New York City chef Ignacio Mattos' journey back home (page 70).

Gathered up all the spring greens you can carry? We'll show you **what to do with them** at saveur.com/spring-greens.



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Cochinita pibil (see page 65 for recipe) from Chando's in Sacramento, California, is just one taco from a stellar road trip chockful of them.

THE RECIPES

Appetizers & Sides

Barbecue Trail Mix 20
French Lentil Salad with Blue Cheese 38
Crespelle en Brodo (Broth with Crêpes) 53
Swiss Chard with Borlotti Beans (Verdure con Fagioli) 54
Fried Stuffed Castelvetroano Olives (Oliva all'Ascolana) 57
Abruzzo-Style Grape Focaccia 58
Sea Bass Crudo 75
Peach and Plum Salad 75
Ignacio Mattos' Potato Salad 79
Crab Toast 80
Tomato Salad with Green Beans and Basil 80

Meat & Poultry

Pork Belly Gyro 31
Roast Beef Sandwich with Walnut Romesco 32
Buttermilk Fried Chicken Sandwich 33
Parker's BBQ Fried Chicken 37
Spaghetti alla Chitarra with Lamb and Sweet Pepper Ragù (Ragù d'Agnello e Peperoni) 53
Porchetta-Style Chicken 54
Goat Birria (Jalisco-Style Goat Stew) 64
Cochinita Pibil Tacos (Yucatán-Style Shredded Pork Tacos with Achiote) 65
Carnitas Tacos (Michoacán-Style Braised Pork Tacos) 69

Chivito 72
Sweetbreads with Chimichurri Criollo 80
Grilled Beef Ribs with Charred Vegetables 80

Seafood & Vegetarian

Lemon-Caper Tuna Sandwich 30
Roasted Sweet Potato Sandwich with Rajas Salsa 31
Pimiento Cheese Sandwich 32
Shrimp Tacos 64
Tacos de Papa Hwy 99 (Potato Tacos) 69
Whole Grilled Sea Bass 79

Desserts & Drinks

Gone in 60 Seconds 22

AeroPress Iced Coffee 22
Zanzibari Pressed Sugarcane Drink 40
Strawberry-Rhubarb Yogurt Pops 44
Cheesecake with Charred Rhubarb Compote and Sliced Strawberries 45
Strawberry-Rhubarb Hand Pies 46
Rhubarb-Strawberry Pâte de Fruit 47
Spicy Michelada 63
Coconut Horchata 69

Miscellaneous

Garlic Aioli 32
Homemade Pickles 33
Don Pepe's Chile de Árbol Salsa 68

MAY

12 EDITOR'S NOTE

The allure of the road

14 AGENDA

Iced coffee, Detroit, and more

24 THE CHOUCROUTE ROUTE

Chasing sausage in Alsace

28 'WICH HUNT

Six expert-made sandwiches

34 SMOKE SIGNAL

Discovering an Argentine oasis of meat and wine

36 OFF THE EATEN PATH

Dishes worth traveling for

42 NEXT STOP: REST STOP

In Thailand, mandatory food detours lead to an epic trip

44 STRAWBERRY RHUBARB REVISITED

Updates to the classic summer combo

83 FROM THE SAVEUR TEST KITCHEN

What we learned this month

90 A MEAL TO REMEMBER

The end of a two-year road trip

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Publication Agreement Number: 40612608
Canada return mail: IMEX, P.O.
Box 25542, London, ON N6C 6B2
Employment opportunities at bonniercorp.com
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 Garnish mint sprig

Add all ingredients except Crispin Original Cider to shaker tin and add ice. Shake and double strain into ice filled highball. Top with cider. Garnish with mint sprig.



PAIR WITH

Crispin Spicy Meatballs

The kick in the meatballs seamlessly balances the sweet of the Sassy Sally craftail.



PAIR WITH

Crispin Braised Pulled Pork

The tart Bank Job craftail cuts through the rich sweetness of the Crispin Braised Pulled Pork Sliders, making this a natural pairing.



THE BANK JOB

4 dashes Angostura bitters
 1/4 oz. ginger syrup
 1/2 oz. honey syrup 1:1
 3/4 oz. lemon juice
 4 oz. Crispin Honey Crisp Cider
 Garnish Orange peel

Add all ingredients except Crispin Honey Crisp Cider to shaker tin and add ice. Shake and double strain into ice filled rocks glass. Top with cider. Express orange oils over drink and garnish with peel.



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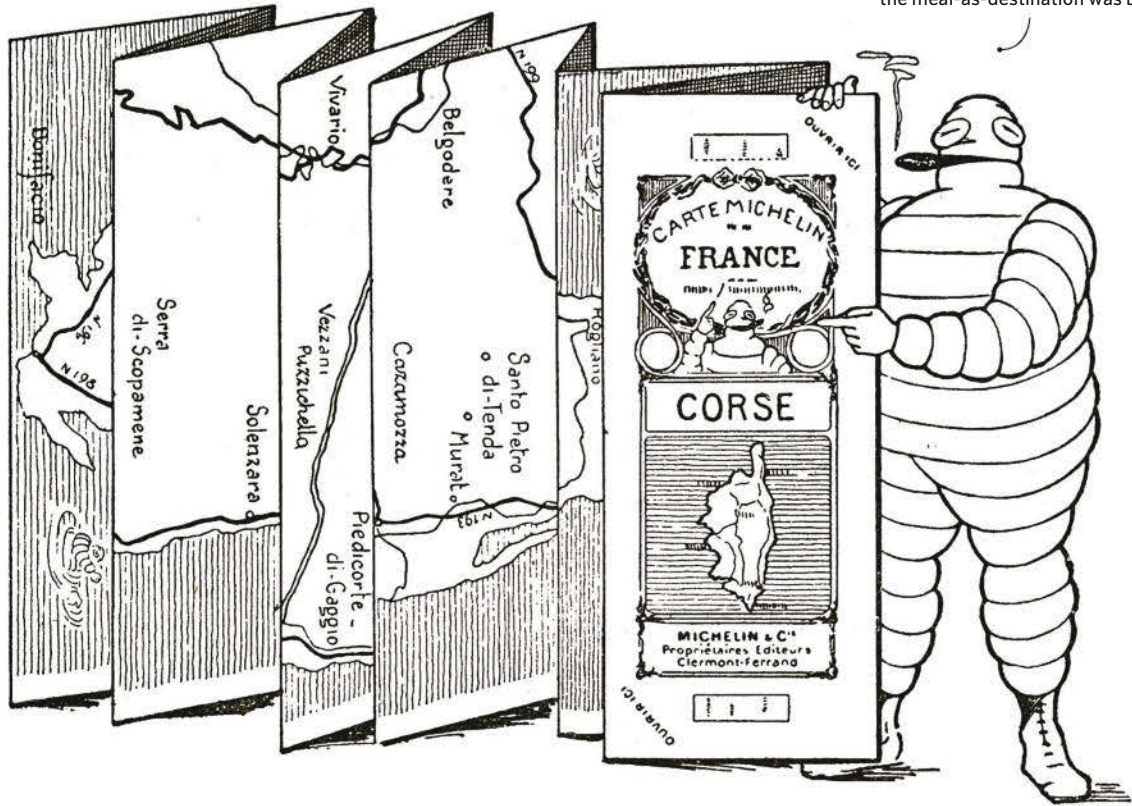
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Today the phrase “Michelin-starred” conjures images of fussy temples of haute gastronomy.

But the original idea was just to encourage drivers to use their newfangled cars (and buy new tires) by enticing them with the promise of meals worth driving for. Thus, the idea of the meal-as-destination was born.



On the Road

If you were to judge on the basis of brazenly bonkers restaurant names alone, then I guess Don Ho's Mexican American Chinese Café is the best roadside attraction I've ever encountered. It was the summer after freshman year in college. I was driving across the country to crash on a friend's couch in L.A. Our car broke down, as cars will do, in arid, empty Salina, Utah. The only open-all-day spot in town: Don Ho's. The only thing to do while you waited for your broken car to get healed: Watch the tumbleweeds blow by till noon, when they served the fried rice with country ham and Mexican hot sauce. It wasn't very good, but it was definitely original.

Other roads have led to more rarified tastes. There was the drive up from Montpellier into the Auvergne—where the sun-tanned Mediterranean gives way to the cattle-dotted green hills of French farm country—leading to Michel Bras' spaceship of a restaurant and one of the greatest lunches ever. Noticing a street-side stand on the wild western end of the island of Madeira, I screeched to a halt for *bolo do caco*, hot griddled bread cooked over fire and slathered with garlic butter. On the North Island of New Zealand, I stopped for oysters at Orongo Bay and ate them on the hood of my rental car. I remember the crisp-juicy suckling pig in the town of Huaroscondo on the road from Cuzco, Peru.

I remember all of the detours for sandwiches, the impromptu snack stops, and the long-haul drives that were all about the dinner waiting at the end of the line. Because there's a special pleasure to eating on the road. The meal-as-destination is an idea nearly as old as the car itself: In 1926, the Michelin guide started doling out stars, eventually dubbing the top-tier restaurants *vaut le voyage*, worth the journey.

Hitting the road to eat. Meals worth the drive. The cooking inspiration we take home from these trips. That's what we're celebrating in this issue—and that's what I'm dreaming of for summer. I may not make it as far as Orongo Bay (or Salina, Utah, for that matter) or anywhere posh enough to turn a Michelin inspector's head, but I do plan to pack the kids in the car and point the GPS to some Long Island clam shacks and purveyors of Italian ice. We'll see where the road takes us.

Adam

Adam Sachs

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AGENDA

The Road Trip Issue 5.15



Nobody does highway rest stops like the Italians. A drive along the autostrada wouldn't be complete without an espresso break at an Autogrill. Photographer Melanie Dunea recently spent a day driving north from Bologna, eating solely at this chain of ubiquitous roadside super-diners. Her friend Gabrielle Hamilton, author and chef at Prune in New York City, turned her on to them, calling these culinary pit stops the "miraculous workhorses of the Italian roadways."



Every Autogrill offers welcome comforts (clockwise from top left): the iconic sign, a beacon for hungry travelers; decorative tins of traditional sweets; coffee-filled chocolates sold at the register; a camouflage-flavored porchetta sandwich. For more of Dunea's pictures and finds from her trip, check out saveur.com/autogrill.

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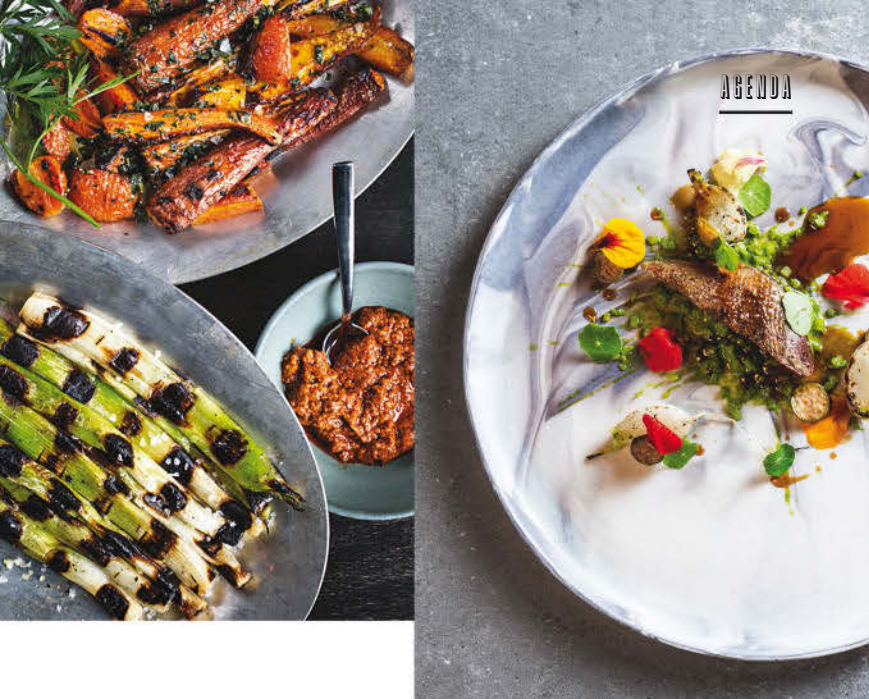
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URBAN ODYSSEY

Destination: Detroit

With its sprawling geography and revved-up food scene, the Motor City is the perfect setting for a one-day road trip

BY JOHN O'CONNOR

Those of us who know and love Detroit consider it a kind of half-finished heaven. We favor its brawny, threadbare aura, its onion-and-mustard-spangled coney dogs, its rambling thoroughfares from a time when Cadillac Eldorados ruled the roads. The city's Lonely Gothic churches, historic Art Deco skyscrapers, and spacious island park are joined by a vast network of urban farms growing all sorts of delicious, fresh things in between swaths of concrete jungle. These farms, together with the city's new restaurants dispersed in pockets all over town, make an urban road trip the best way to explore Motown.

Start your cruise at **Anthology Coffee** (1401 Vermont St.; anthologycoffee.com), the city's newest specialty roaster. The warm, airy café is stashed away behind an obscure yet quintessentially New Detroit spot: a co-working space for local entrepreneurs and creative types in a former Corktown printing factory.

There, owner Josh Longsdorf brews his single-origin beans at a Modbar espresso machine and a spacious pour-over bar.

Suitably caffeinated, you'll want to head northeast on Jefferson Avenue, through downtown and past the iconic Joe Louis fist-bump monument at Hart Plaza, keeping Canada on your right, until you arrive at **Rose's Fine Food** (10551 E. Jefferson Ave.; rosesfinefood.com). Run by cousins Lucy Carnaghi and Molly Mitchell, the 30-seat restaurant specializes in refined diner food, like brisket hash, huge cinnamon rolls, and old-fashioned egg creams. Consider taking your meal across the water on Belle Isle, an idyllic 1,000-acre island park with an Albert Kahn-designed aquarium and conservancy plunked in the middle of the Detroit River.

On your way back downtown, take a detour to the Heidelberg Project, a massive outdoor art installation, including a polka-dot house and streetlamps festooned with stuffed animals, occupying two whole city

Detroit's revitalized restaurant scene includes (clockwise from top left): Selden Standard, where produce, like wood-roasted carrots and grilled scallions with romesco, is the star; Torino, a tasting-menu restaurant serving dishes like wood pigeon with turnips and flowers; Rose's Fine Food, an updated diner with a farmers' market touch; and the tasting room at Detroit City Distillery, where drinkers can find cocktails both modern and classic (like the manhattan above).

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: MARVIN SHAOUNI PHOTO, JEFF NGUYEN, JESSE GREENE, STEPHANIE BASSOS



Local ingredients and products appear everywhere (clockwise from top left): Selden Standard offers seasonal cocktails; the seven-acre D-Town Farm grows a variety of food, including collards; Anthology Coffee offers pour-overs made with its own beans; Selden Standard's squid-ink chitarra is crafted with local flour; Detroit City Distillery, emblazoned with a massive shark's mouth, produces craft spirits; and owners Molly Mitchell (left) and Lucy Carnaghi of Rose's Fine Food source produce from urban farms.



“The real stars of our plates are sourced within three miles of here. Detroit’s urban farms are a big part of the reason why I cook here.”

—chef Andy Hollyday, Selden Standard

around chef Garrett Lipar’s free-spirited, Nordic-influenced cuisine—the distance between coney dogs and fluke topped with pickled mango, corn dust, and micro Cuban oregano indeed seems large. A daily tasting menu features foraged ingredients, highbrow fermentation, and beautiful, fussed-over platings, like a dish of tender grilled and pressure-cooked octopus with braised seaweed, salty scallop chips, and heart-of-palm purée topped with pickled mushrooms. “It’s new, and it’s not comfort food,” says Lipar, a 2015 James Beard nominee for the Rising Star Chef award. “But it tells the story of this region from an angle you probably haven’t tasted before.”

blocks. Just west is **Eastern Market** (2934 Russell St.; detroiteasternmarket.com), a sprawling, open-air bazaar that is the central nervous system of Detroit’s culinary resurgence. Occupying a labyrinthine building, more than 250 vendors sell produce and locally made food, such as organic raw-milk cheeses by Oliver Farms and juniper-and-garlic brats from Corridor Sausage Co.

From there, it’s a few minutes to **Selden Standard** (3921 Second Ave.; seldenstandard.com), chef Andy Hollyday’s local, seasonal restaurant. Lunch hovers somewhere between rustic Mediterranean and Midwest meat-and-potatoes, with a fried chicken sandwich and a hearty veggie ribollita on the menu, plus an outstanding pastrami. “I’m inspired by food from all over the world,” Hollyday says. “But the real stars of our plates are sourced within three miles of here. Detroit’s urban farms are a big part of the reason why I cook here.”

To visit the city’s largest contiguous urban farm (there are 1,500 and counting), head west on I-96 after lunch and hop off at Schoolcraft Avenue, then turn left on Outer Drive West, until you land at **D-Town Farm** (you can arrange a visit through the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network, 3800 Puritan Ave.; detroitblackfoodsecurity.org). Tucked behind a formidable deer fence are vegetable beds of organic mushrooms, kale, garlic, and more; several beehives; and four hoop houses. Spread out over seven acres, the farm, which is largely run by volunteers, is surrounded by an open prairie and wetlands in the verdant and rambling 1,100-acre River Rouge Park.

Turning north, you’ll pass 8 Mile Road, the highway that composes Detroit’s northern boundary, and plunge into the suburb of Ferndale, home of **Torino** (201 E. 9 Mile Road, Ferndale; torinoferndale.com). It took Detroiters a while to wrap their heads

For the 20-minute backtrack downtown, forget I-75 and take Woodward Avenue the whole way. Some two dozen Gothic, Beaux Arts, and Romanesque Revival churches line the road, as well as several historic Art Deco beauties like the big-block Fisher Building and the old Majestic Theatre. Along with pre-war landmarks, Detroit is slowly reclaiming its storied distilling past. **Detroit City Distillery** (2462 Riopelle St.; detroitcitydistillery.com), a producer of small-batch whiskey, bourbon, vodka, and gin, is the latest among craft-spirit ventures. Founded by eight childhood friends, it’s housed in a cavernous old slaughterhouse in Eastern Market. An attached tasting room is outfitted with a Prohibition-era mahogany bar salvaged from a local store and serves a mix of classic cocktails and house specialties, like the old-fashioned-inspired Fashionably Yogi, with bacon-washed bourbon, maple syrup, house coffee-pecan bitters, and orange. It’s the perfect nightcap for a winding urban tour.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: MARVIN SHAOUNI PHOTO, D-TOWN FARM; MICHELLE & CHRIS GERARD; MARVIN SHAOUNI PHOTO, STEPHANIE BASSOS; JESSE GREENE

LA JOLLA: *Luxury Seaside Village*



Many treasures make La Jolla “The Jewel” of San Diego and one of the finest vacation destinations in Southern California: luxurious hotels and resorts, oceanfront fine dining, upscale shopping, world-class arts, and a strikingly beautiful seaside setting complemented by endless outdoor recreational activities.

Coastal Retreats

Enjoy dramatic coastline views during your stay at **THE LODGE AT TORREY PINES**. This fabulous coastal resort boasts top-of-the-line amenities and is just steps from the Torrey Pines Golf Course, a longtime favorite of golfers of all levels and home of the 2008 U.S. Open.

Stay at **LA VALENCIA HOTEL**, just steps away from the Pacific Ocean, where you can enjoy two of La Jolla's most distinguished restaurants.

Welcoming guests since 1913, the modernized **GRANDE COLONIAL** is a luxury boutique hotel with historic charm set amidst the pristine beaches and regal bluffs of Southern California's most beautiful coastal village.

Can't-Miss Cuisine

HERRINGBONE is the fifth restaurant in celebrity chef Brian Malarkey's Fabric of Social Dining family. Originally a vintage warehouse, the space was redesigned to create an amazing ambiance that includes olive trees, a cozy lounge, and an intimate private dining room.

Indulge at the new **BIJOU FRENCH BISTRO**, where Chef de Cuisine Shaun Gethin collaborates with acclaimed Chef William Bradley from Addison restaurant at The Grand Del Mar on a Parisian-inspired menu where seasonal ingredients rendezvous with classic French fare.

PUESTO is a popular go-to for gourmet Mexican street food, using all-natural meats, sustainable seafood, and local organic greens. Taco favorites include carne asada, chicken al pastor, and potato soy chorizo.

A La Jolla staple known for their world-famous French toast, “Coast Toast,” **BROCKTON VILLA** is the perfect place to start your day with views of the ocean and a filling breakfast.

Cultural Must-Sees

Check out the **MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART SAN DIEGO** in La Jolla, offering a unique blend of contemporary art and natural beauty in a setting that was once the oceanfront home of local philanthropist, Ellen Browning Scripps. The distinguished building overlooks an outdoor sculpture garden and provides sweeping views of the Pacific Ocean.

Don't miss the Tony Award®-winning **LA JOLLA PLAYHOUSE**, one of the most prestigious theaters in the nation, producing numerous shows that have moved to Broadway including the musicals “Memphis” and “Jersey Boys”.

Shop ‘til you drop on **PROSPECT STREET**—known for its high-end boutiques, art galleries, and fine dining options—while taking in some of the the buzz-generating **MURALS OF LA JOLLA** throughout the village.

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BARBECUE TRAIL MIX

MAKES 4 CUPS

COOK TIME: ABOUT 2 HOURS

- 4 slices bacon
- 1 tbsp. maple syrup
- 1/2 cup cashews
- 1/2 cup pecans
- 1/2 cup sesame sticks (nuts.com)
- 1/4 cup cacao nibs (scharffenberger.com)
- 1/4 cup Marcona almonds (tienda.com)
- 1/4 cup pumpkin seeds
- 2 tbsp. unsalted butter
- 2 tsp. sugar
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 1/2 tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- 1/2 tsp. garlic powder
- 1/2 tsp. smoked paprika
- 1/4 tsp. cayenne
- 1/4 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1/4 tsp. ground cumin
- 1/4 cup barbecue sauce
- 6 dried apricots, thinly sliced
- 3 dried figs, thinly sliced

Heat oven to 250°. Lay bacon on an aluminum foil-lined baking sheet fitted with a wire rack. Brush bacon with maple syrup; bake until the fat has rendered and the bacon is dry like jerky, 1-1 1/2 hours. Let bacon cool and chop into 1/2" pieces; set aside. Heat oven to 300°. Heat a 12" skillet over medium; toast cashews, pecans, sesame sticks, cacao nibs, almonds, and pumpkin seeds until fragrant and beginning to color, 3-5 minutes. Add butter, sugar, salt, pepper, garlic powder, paprika, cayenne, cinnamon, and cumin; toss to melt butter. Remove from heat and stir in barbecue sauce; spread evenly onto a parchment paper-lined baking sheet. Bake, stirring occasionally, until mixture is dry and toasted, about 25 minutes. Stir in reserved bacon, the apricots, and figs; bake 15 minutes more. Let trail mix cool completely before serving. Store in an airtight container up to 1 month.



You never have to worry about a dodgy liquor store with this hide-tanned **American bison four-bottle "whiskey" carrier** (\$765; shop mulholland.com). It has a removable insulated nylon liner, so after you empty all those bottles, the bag can turn into a carryall.



Manufactured since 1894, the **Best Made Japanese Higo** (\$65; bestmadeco.com) features a "steel sandwich" of white steel encased in hand-hammered carbon steel. Keep this unique pocketknife in the glove compartment for slicing cheese, *salumi*, and fruit.



The BPA-free **S'well** (\$25-\$45; swellbottle.com) will keep coffee hot for 12 hours and water cold for 24, and is insulated to prevent condensation from forming on the outside. It's available in dozens of bright colors and finishes.

"The trail mix changes a little every time I make it—you can substitute any nuts or dried fruit." —chef Edward Lee, 610 Magnolia



MASTER MIX

Chef Edward Lee of nouveau Southern restaurant 610 Magnolia, in Louisville, Kentucky, created this explosively flavored trail mix for his 22-city *Smoke and Pickles* (Artisan, 2013) cookbook tour. He uses three kinds of nuts (cashews, pecans, Marcona almonds), two kinds of dried fruit (apricots, figs), cacao nibs, and a flurry of spices (cinnamon, cumin, and more). Barbecue sauce and bacon glazed with maple syrup add an irresistible savory-sweet tang to the snack.

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JAVA UPDATE

Brew for the Road

Driving's other fuel—that would be caffeine, not gas—gets spruced up with some surprising mixers

Gone in 60 Seconds

SERVES 1

For this offbeat recipe, Sam Penix of Everyman Espresso in New York City treats iced coffee like a cocktail, adding peach nectar and lime juice to amp the beans' citrus and other fruit notes. The bright, light, yet complex result is surprisingly refreshing and almost tea-like—something akin to a coffee Arnold Palmer—with no funky coffee-mouth effect.

- 5 oz. iced coffee
- 1 oz. peach nectar
- 1/4 oz. lime juice, plus lime wedge for serving
- 1/4 oz. simple syrup or 1 sugar packet

Combine ingredients in an ice-filled glass or thermos. Stir to combine. Squeeze lime wedge over top and drop into glass.

AeroPress Iced Coffee

SERVES 1

Place 1/4 cup good-quality finely ground coffee in an AeroPress; place over top of a glass filled with 1/2 cup ice. Slowly add 2/3 cup hot water to the AeroPress, stir gently, and let steep for 1 1/2 minutes. Press plunger down completely and remove AeroPress from glass.

The **Therm-O Terra** (\$27; aquaovo.com) is insulated with double-walled borosilicate glass.

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"Traveling as much as I do, I always bring an **AeroPress** (\$29; aeropress.com). I make coffee on the side of the road, in airports, in hotel rooms, on trains, planes, you name it!" —*Duane Sorenson, founder, Stumptown, Portland*

"I really like the new glass **KeepCup** (\$30; prima-coffee.com). It doesn't get the tainted flavor that a plastic cup does." —*Anne Lunell, co-owner, Koppi in Helsingborg, Sweden, and 2006 Swedish Barista Champion*



"Everyone loves the cool new **Acaia Pearl** scale (\$129; acaia.com)—it sends data on weight and pour rate in real time to your smart phone as you make coffee.

The quick-heating **Bonavita travel kettle** (\$40; intelligentsiacoffee.com) makes water for one brew." —*Stephen Morrissey of Intelligentsia, Chicago, and 2008 World Barista Champion*





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The CHOUCROUTE ROUTE

A TRIP SPENT CRISSCROSSING ALSACE, READING LITERATURE TO FRENCH COAL MINERS AND SEARCHING FOR AN ELUSIVE PLATE OF SAUERKRAUT AND SAUSAGE

by Andrew Sean Greer

We were called *les belles étrangères*: the beautiful foreigners. Twelve American writers brought to France as part of a cultural exchange delivering foreign literature to rural communities. After we arrived in Paris, we were paired off and given our assignments: One set was sent to Corsica, another to Nice, another to Marseille. I was informed, however, that my partner had hurt his back. I would be traveling alone to...the director looked at his clipboard. "Mulhouse," he said. Pronounced "mool-OOZE." Somewhere in Alsace. I was introduced to my chaperone—a pretty English-free Algerian girl named Sylvie—and off we went to the German border, to Mulhouse, a wind-harried industrial town once known as the "Manchester of France." There I was introduced to the Provincial Librarian, a weary, bald, monkish man. I say monkish because, though fluent in English, he seemed to have taken a vow of silence, and in this silence I was taken to dinner. Here, at last, I felt hope. One of my earliest childhood memories is of an Alsatian restaurant that served choucroute garnie, a rustic dish of sauerkraut, bacon, sausage, and potatoes. I ordered it in my halting French, but the Librarian, finally speaking, intervened. "No no," he explained, "this is not the place for choucroute." Obediently, I sat back. But I vowed I would have my choucroute.

Early the next morning, Sylvie appeared in my hotel lobby and led me to where the Librarian waited, in his car, a Twingo, to bring me to Pulversheim. The road was bumpy, the sky gray; we passed through small towns of half-timbered buildings and brick church towers. Then to the library, where a number of local coal miners had gathered to hear me read from my novel. Dinner was in the town's sole restaurant. I looked at Sylvie and the Librarian and asked: "Choucroute?" They shook their heads: not the place for choucroute. The next day, I was taken via a winding road to a mountaintop in the Vosges where a blanket of fog erased a famous view. We stood beside the Twingo in silence as the wind whipped around us. Then down the mountain to Murbach, where we ate in the library itself, crammed into a kids-section table while a librarian unwrapped the cellophane from my slice of pâté. No choucroute. The next day, through roads so narrow the Provincial Librarian had to fold in the side mirrors, we arrived in medieval-looking Ensisheim. In a church shop I discovered an embroidered recipe for choucroute, with impossible ingredients like "lard du Strasbourg," but alas, it was not for sale. After I had read to the coal miners there, the Provincial Librarian drove through the twilight forest to a crumbling monastery,

where he stared longingly as though he belonged there; Sylvie had me take pictures of her in a new hat.

Guebwiller was next, in the pouring rain, and the Provincial Librarian drove so slowly that one motorcyclist after another passed us on the road. The librarians there were proud to show me "American desserts" they had made from online recipes; these turned out to be cupcakes. The next day, we reached Aspach-le-Bas through dark early-morning roads where the only lights in the towns we passed through were from bakers. I arrived in time to have a lunch of aspic and red wine with the high school principal. No choucroute. I read to miners in Ottmarsheim, Ungersheim, Houssen, Carspach, and Munchhouse. But it seemed that no place—not even hopeful-sounding Munchhouse—was the place for choucroute. When my time was finally over, and we drove south through the Pfaffenheim Forest back to Mulhouse, to a quaint little restaurant, I was once again defeated. I asked at last: "All right, so where is the place for choucroute?" The Librarian exchanged a baffled glance with Sylvie before telling me, as if it were too obvious to be uttered: "But of course, you have it at home!" I could have hit him with a sausage.

Except that he was right; it *is* best at home, I later learned. There is nothing quite like having guests arrive to a house perfumed with Riesling-simmered pork or sitting down to enjoy the tang of good mustard with pork-soaked sauerkraut, smoky bacon, and wursts at your own table. And you may, as I do, make a wall of sausages between the meats and potatoes, re-creating on a plate that German border, that map of Alsace, where I read to coal miners on one choucroute-less trip to rural France.

For a classic choucroute recipe from Alsatian chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten, go to saveur.com/choucroute.



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STACK ATTACK

"If you want to bump this up a notch, **add a slice or two of bacon**, because bacon makes everything better." —John Bates, Noble Sandwich Co., Austin, Texas

Pimento Cheese with Homemade Pickles (see page 32 for recipe).

Buttermilk Fried Chicken with Jalapeño Slaw (see page 33 for recipe).

"Let the chicken cool down before assembling the sandwich, so the crisp coleslaw doesn't wilt." —Alison Barakat, Bakesale Betty, Oakland

'Wich HUNT

Great sandwiches don't happen by accident: You've got to balance moistness and crunch, weigh toppings and main components, choose bread that will make each element shine, and construct them so that every bite yields the ultimate satisfaction. Here are six expertly crafted sandwiches—equally great eaten at home or packed for a trip—from masters of the art form. Some get even better after resting in the backseat for a while... if you can wait that long.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOSEPH DE LEO

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Lemon-Caper Tuna Sandwich

MAKES 2 SANDWICHES
COOK TIME: 30 MINUTES

This briny, tangy sandwich, from Joanne Chang of Flour Bakery + Café in Boston, benefits from sitting awhile after assembly. The oils from the tapenade will seep into the bread, making it moist but not soggy, and the sharp flavors of pickled fennel, capers, and olives will mellow pleasantly.

For the pickled fennel:

- ¼ cup rice wine vinegar
- 3 tbsp. sugar
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 1 fennel bulb, trimmed and cut into ¼" pieces

For the olive tapenade:

- 1 cup pitted kalamata olives
- 2 tbsp. olive oil
- 1½ tbsp. minced basil
- 1 tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- 1 tsp. capers
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

For the sandwich:

- ¼ cup capers, drained and minced
- 6 tbsp. olive oil
- 2 tbsp. minced chives
- 1½ tbsp. Dijon mustard
- 2 4-oz. cans tuna in water, drained
- 2 lemons, zested and juiced
- 2 sprigs rosemary, minced
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- ½ Whole-wheat baguette, halved lengthwise and then crosswise
- Baby arugula, for serving

1 Make the pickled fennel: Combine vinegar, sugar, salt, and ½ cup water in a 1-qt. saucepan over high; cook until sugar has dissolved, 3 minutes. Pour over fennel; cool.

2 Make the tapenade: Combine olives, oil, basil, lemon juice, capers, garlic, salt, and pepper in the bowl of a food processor; blend until roughly chopped.

3 Make the sandwich: Stir ½ cup pickled fennel, the capers, oil, chives, mustard, tuna, lemon zest and juice, rosemary, salt, and pepper in a bowl. Spread tuna salad on bottom of baguette, then top with arugula, tapenade, and top of baguette.

"Bread doesn't like the fridge, because it'll totally dry out in there. **Don't refrigerate!**"
—Joanne Chang, Flour Bakery + Café, Boston

Lemon-Caper Tuna

"Cut the potatoes the width of your pinky. They'll be thick enough to stay nice and tender when they cook and not dehydrate."
—William Mote, Butcher & Bee, Charleston, South Carolina

Roasted Sweet Potato with Rajas Salsa (see page 31 for recipe)



Sandwich Theory

A well-made sandwich is all about balance, according to John Bates, who runs Noble Sandwich Co. in Austin, Texas, with Brandon Martinez. Here are three tips he gives his staffers before they start composing their sandwiches.

- 1** Pair **lean** proteins, like turkey or roast beef, with rich, fatty sauces (think aioli or olive tapenade).
- 2** Match **rich** proteins, like tongue or braised oxtail, with bright, crunchy elements (like a tartly dressed slaw).
- 3** **Properly portion** your ingredients: Aim for equal parts protein, veg, and bread. Don't overstuff!

Roasted Sweet Potato Sandwich with Rajas Salsa

MAKES 2 SANDWICHES; PHOTO ON PAGE 30
COOK TIME: 40 MINUTES

William More, at Butcher & Bee in Charleston, South Carolina, uses meaty sweet potatoes (which can be roasted a day in advance) as the base for this vegetarian sandwich. His salsa, made of tomatoes and strips of roasted poblano and cherry peppers—*rajas* in Spanish—can also be used as an accompaniment to meat or fish.

- 1 lb. sweet potatoes, peeled and sliced ½" thick lengthwise
- 1 tbsp. olive oil
- 1 tsp. ground cumin
- ½ tsp. ancho chile powder
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 2 ½ tbsp. fresh lime juice
- 2 tbsp. minced cilantro, plus ½ cup leaves and tender stems
- 15 cherry tomatoes, quartered
- 6 sweet, jarred cherry peppers, thinly sliced
- 2 roasted poblano peppers, peeled and sliced ¼" thick
- ¼ cup sour cream
- 2 hoagie rolls, halved lengthwise

Heat oven to 400°. Toss potatoes, oil, cumin, chile powder, salt, and pepper on a baking sheet and spread into an even layer; roast, flipping once, until cooked and browned, 20 minutes. Mix 2 tbsp. lime juice, minced cilantro, the tomatoes, peppers, salt, and pepper in a bowl; set salsa aside. Stir remaining lime juice and the sour cream in a bowl. To assemble the sandwiches, layer bottom halves of hoagie rolls with potatoes, salsa, sour cream, cilantro leaves, and tops of rolls.

Pork Belly Gyro

MAKES 2 SANDWICHES
COOK TIME: 1 HOUR 30 MINUTES

By starting with a low cooking temperature and then switching to a high one, Rick Gencarelli of Lardo, in Portland, Oregon, ensures a pork belly with perfect texture. The low temp slowly renders out the fat without making the fibers tough, and a higher finish adds a beautiful brown sheen. Use this technique when cooking any pork belly.

- 1 lb. boneless, skinless pork belly
- 1 tbsp. garlic powder
- ½ tsp. dried marjoram
- ½ tsp. dried rosemary
- ½ tsp. dried thyme
- ½ tsp. freshly ground black pepper, plus more to taste
- ½ tsp. ground cumin
- ¼ tsp. za'atar (kalustyans.com)

- 1 shallot, sliced ¼" thick
- ¼ cup plain, full-fat Greek yogurt
- ¼ cup sour cream
- 1 tsp. plus 1 tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- ½ tsp. minced oregano
- 1 small cucumber (one-quarter grated and squeezed dry, three-quarters thinly sliced)
- 1 tsp. kosher salt, plus more to taste
- 2 tbsp. sugar
- 1 tsp. sumac (kalustyans.com)
- ½ cup shredded romaine lettuce
- 1 plum tomato, cored and roughly chopped
- 1 preserved lemon rind, minced
- 2 9" pocket pitas, halved

Heat oven to 275°. Place pork belly on an aluminum foil-lined baking sheet. Mix garlic powder, marjoram, rosemary, thyme, ½ tbsp. black pepper, the cumin, and za'atar in a bowl; rub on pork belly. Roast 40 minutes. Increase oven to 375°; roast 40 minutes more. Let cool; slice into ½" strips. Heat an 8" cast-iron skillet over high; cook shallot until charred, 10–12 minutes, and let cool. Stir shallot, the yogurt, sour cream, 1 tsp. lemon juice, the oregano, grated cucumber, salt, and pepper in a bowl; set tzatziki aside. Combine sliced cucumber, sugar, 1 tsp. salt, and the sumac in a bowl; let sit 10 minutes, then toss with remaining ingredients. To assemble sandwiches, stuff pitas with pork belly, tzatziki, and cucumber and lettuce mixture.

“We think about building sandwiches in the way that a chef thinks about building a plate. It’s a question of layering textures and flavors and making the food exciting.”

—JOHN BATES,
Noble Sandwich Co.

Pork Belly Gyro

*“I tried to re-create thin gyro meat with shaved pork belly, but **thick slabs are better**. If it’s too thin, it crisps up too much.” — Rick Gencarelli, Lardo, Portland*





Make Your Own Garlic Aioli

Great on any sandwich
except a PB&J

Whisk 2 tsp. Dijon mustard, ½ tsp. kosher salt, 3 garlic cloves mashed into a paste, and 2 egg yolks in a medium bowl; while whisking, slowly drizzle in 1 cup canola oil until emulsified. Makes 1 cup.

STACK ATTACK

Roast Beef Sandwich with Walnut Romesco

MAKES 2 SANDWICHES
COOK TIME: 15 MINUTES

“You usually think of roast beef with horseradish,” says Fundamental LA’s Philip Pretty, who created this newfangled, soon-to-be-classic combination. “But this walnut romesco has elements that bring out the beefiness, without overpowering it.” Keep the romesco chunky for textural contrast.

- ½ cup walnuts, toasted
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 2 tsp. smoked paprika

- ½ tsp. ancho chile powder
- 1 clove garlic, peeled
- 1 roasted red bell pepper, peeled and seeded
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- Garlic aioli (see recipe on this page), for serving
- 2 ciabatta rolls, halved lengthwise
- ½ lb. thinly sliced deli roast beef
- Homemade pickles (see recipe, page 33), for serving

Combine toasted walnuts, oil, paprika, ancho chile powder, garlic, roasted bell pepper, salt, and pepper in the bowl of a food processor; purée until coarsely ground and set romesco aside. To assemble the sandwiches, spread garlic aioli on bottoms of rolls; top with roast beef, homemade pickles, reserved romesco, and tops of rolls.

Pimento Cheese Sandwich with Homemade Pickles

MAKES 2 SANDWICHES
PHOTO ON PAGE 28
COOK TIME: 15 MINUTES

John Bates and Brandon Martinez of Noble Sandwich Co. in Austin, Texas, add sriracha to their chunky pimento cheese recipe in this sandwich, upping the spice factor and helping to offset the creaminess of the cheddar. The spread is so good, Bates recommends slathering it on everything from romaine spears to crackers.

- 6 oz. grated sharp cheddar cheese
- 6 tbsp. garlic aioli (see recipe on this page)
- 2 tsp. sriracha
- 1 tsp. apple cider vinegar
- ¾ tsp. paprika
- ¾ tsp. Worcestershire sauce
- 2 scallions, minced
- 1 roasted red bell pepper, peeled, seeded, and minced
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 4 slices white sandwich bread
- Homemade pickles (see recipe, page 33), for serving
- Thinly shredded iceberg lettuce, for serving

Mix cheddar cheese, aioli, sriracha, cider vinegar, paprika, Worcestershire, scallions, roasted bell pepper, salt, and pepper in a bowl. Spread 2 slices bread with pimento cheese; top with pickles, shredded lettuce, and remaining bread slices.

“I like to **toast the inside of the bread** to ensure it doesn’t get soggy, even with a spread on it.” —Philip Pretty, Fundamental LA



Roast Beef
with Walnut
Romesco

Buttermilk Fried Chicken Sandwich

MAKES 2 SANDWICHES

PHOTO ON PAGE 28

COOK TIME: 1 HOUR AND 20 MINUTES

The chicken in this sandwich, from Alison Barakat of Bakesale Betty in Oakland, gets dredged once in buttermilk and twice in flour, which ensures a crisp coating. Add the crunchy, spicy jalapeño slaw right before serving.

- 1 cup buttermilk
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 2 4-oz. boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 2 ¼ tsp., plus ½ cup red wine vinegar
- 1 tsp. Dijon mustard
- 2 tbsp. olive oil
- 1 small red onion, thinly sliced
- 2 cups thinly sliced green cabbage
- 2 tbsp. minced parsley
- 2 jalapeños, stemmed, seeded, and thinly sliced
- 1 cup flour
- ½ tsp. cayenne
- Canola oil, for frying
- 2 ciabatta rolls, halved lengthwise

1 Whisk buttermilk, salt, and pepper in a bowl. Add chicken and toss to coat; cover with plastic wrap and chill 1 hour.

2 Whisk 2¼ tsp. vinegar, the mustard, salt, and pepper in a large bowl. While whisking, slowly drizzle in olive oil until vinaigrette is emulsified; set aside. Stir remaining ½ cup vinegar and the onion in a bowl; let sit 5 minutes, then drain, discarding vinegar. Add onion, along with the cabbage, parsley, jalapeños, salt, and pepper, to bowl with reserved vinaigrette; toss to combine. Cover slaw with plastic wrap and chill until ready to assemble sandwiches.

3 Whisk flour, cayenne, salt, and pepper in a shallow bowl. Heat 2" canola oil in a 6-qt. saucepan until a deep-fry thermometer reads 325°. Working with one chicken breast at a time, dip chicken in flour mixture, shaking off excess. Then dip in buttermilk and, once again, in flour. Fry chicken, flipping once, until golden and cooked through, about 8 minutes, or until an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part of the breast reads 165°. Transfer chicken to paper towels to drain; season with salt. To assemble sandwiches, place chicken on bottoms of rolls; top with coleslaw and tops of rolls.

D.I.Y. SANDWICH STAPLE



Make Your Own Pickles

When it comes to adding crunch, these tangy guys put shredded lettuce to shame

Tightly pack 1½ lb. pickling cucumbers cut into spears, 6 fresh dill sprigs, and 1 thinly sliced small yellow onion in two sterilized 1-qt. glass jars. Bring 3 cups white vinegar, 3 tbsp. sugar, 1 tbsp. each coriander, fennel, and mustard seeds, and ½ cup water to a boil in a 1-qt. saucepan; pour over vegetables and cover with lids. Let sit 24 hours. Makes two 1-qt. jars.

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Smoke Signal

IN WHICH A COUPLE STUMBLE UPON
AN OASIS IN REMOTE ARGENTINA WITH
FRIENDLY PARRILLEROS, HUNGRY DOGS,
AND MIND-BLOWING STEAKS

by Peter Jon Lindberg



Few things can focus a driver's mind like hunger. Hunger, and the palpable likelihood of death.

Four days of hairpin turns and guardrail-less mountain passes had markedly upped our odds of the latter, as we piloted our mud-crusted truck across the red-clay deserts and mist-cloaked summits of Argentina's northwest. The route down from Salta City had taken us through a dizzying array of landscapes, mood swings, and hunger pangs. (In the long lonely stretches between settlements, there was absolutely no place to eat.) Rutted dirt roads rattled our skulls and eventually claimed our rear fender. Now dusk was encroaching, and our destination was miles away. As the sun dropped behind distant bluffs—the road nearly vanishing in the gloom—my wife and I were in a bit of a state.

"I could murder an empanada," I said.

"I could murder you," she replied.

We needed food. And Malbec—definitely Malbec. Forty silent minutes later, we pulled into Cafayate. After Mendoza, this is Argentina's second major wine city, and the de facto tourist hub of Salta Province. Though visitors have infused some polish, Cafayate remains a rugged frontier town—imagine Sonoma dropped on a dusty martian plateau.

Stringed lights sparkled over the main square, where a trio of musicians was playing. Folk songs could wait: We hadn't eaten since breakfast. Following our gas-station map—in Argentina's *altiplano*, GPS is hopeless—we steered to the far edge of town, where squat houses gave way to endless expanses of scrub. Up ahead, a telltale plume of smoke curled into the night sky. At last, we'd reached Shula Cata.

Friends in Buenos Aires had declared this the finest *parrilla* (steakhouse) in all of Salta. Calling it a restaurant is kind: Shula Cata was more an assemblage of bricks, lightbulbs, tables, and chairs, held together by the gravitational force of a massive wood-fired grill.

Now if only we could find a seat. The place was packed, inside and out; tables filled every inch of the sidewalk. The proprietor was unfazed. He disappeared out back, returned with a grin and a dented table, took the table outside, unfolded its wobbly legs, and set it down in the street, right next to an old Ford Falcon.

After a drive like that, we'd have eaten in the dumpster. And so down we sat at our curbside table, with one leg in an oil patch and another literally in the gutter. A bottle of wine appeared, unbidden but entirely welcome. A breeze rolled in from the mountains—Salta nights turn chilly quick—so we went inside to warm ourselves by the grill's glowing embers.

Atop were hissing slabs of *bife ancho* (ribeye), spirals of plump sausage, and, not least, fire-licked lobes of *mollejas* (sweetbreads), an Argentine obsession and our go-to order for the past week. We chatted up the *parrillero*, a hefty guy in a leather apron, as he flipped the meats onto huge wooden carving boards for serving. He asked what we wanted. We pointed at everything.

The steak was terrific, even better doused in a fiery chimichurri, but the sweetbreads were astonishing, with crisp, caramelized exteriors giving way to creamy tenderness within. One tangy, mineral bite made the torturous drive seem utterly worthwhile. After another glass of wine, we decided that the whole trip had been thrilling, unforgettable—for crying out loud let's do it all over again.

By this point we were being sniffed at by inquisitive stray dogs, which the proprietor would now and then chase off. Our chairs listed to one side; our clothes reeked of grill smoke. None of this mattered—the food was that good. Granted, relief after such a harrowing journey probably affected our impression. It always does: Food and the road are two faces of the same coin, each enhancing the value of the other. We lingered long into the night at our crooked street table, gazing at a bowl of unfamiliar stars, the flipside constellations of the southern sky.



ILLUSTRATION: LUCI GUTIERREZ

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OFF THE EATEN PATH

Every food-loving traveler's dream is to return home having made a discovery: the hole-in-the-wall restaurant or food stall—in some obscure, out-of-the-way place, of course—hawking the most incredible food or drink imaginable. We reached out to some of our favorite chefs and artisans for their worth-a-trek adventures, and instead of guarding their finds close to the chest, they shared them. Here are four spots worth traveling for (with a few recipes, too, in case you don't find yourself in Zanzibar any time soon).

RESTAURANTE CALDO DE PIEDRA

OAXACA, MEXICO

“Stone soup is a prehistoric dish made by plunging heated river stones into a gourd with water and seafood in it. On a road outside of Oaxaca's center, there's this restaurant—really more like a hut with no walls—that specializes in it. In goes the stone, and a few minutes later, after a lot of sizzling, you're left with the most delicious, light seafood soup. Beyond the drama and the theater, you could kind of imagine someone trying to make it in a three-Michelin-starred restaurant.”

—Alex Stupak, chef-owner,
Empellón, New York City

Traversing the
autopista in
Oaxaca, Mexico.

PARKER'S BBQ

WILSON, NC

"This is the best chicken I've ever had in my life. It was so good that, the first time I had it, I got up and asked the owner of the restaurant how he made it. They do it really simply, very old-fashioned. It's got the crispiest skin, not greasy at all, and the place feels straight out of the 1950s."

—Elizabeth Karmel, chef, restaurateur, and author of *Taming the Flame* (Wiley, 2005)

PARKER'S BBQ FRIED CHICKEN

SERVES 2
COOK TIME: 25 MINUTES

Parker's BBQ in Wilson, North Carolina, famous for its Family Platter with shatteringly crisp fried chicken, goes through seven to eight thousand chickens a week. A favorite of chef Elizabeth Karmel's, this super-simple recipe lets the flavor of the chicken shine.

- Canola oil, for frying
- 1 cup flour
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 whole chicken, cut into 8 pieces, backbone discarded

Heat 2" oil in a 6-qt. saucepan over medium until a deep-fry thermometer reads 350°. Place flour in a large bowl, season with salt and pepper, and set aside. Generously season chicken all over with salt and pepper. Dredge chicken pieces in flour, shaking off excess. Place in oil and fry, turning occasionally, until chicken is cooked through and dark brown, 15 minutes for white meat, 20 minutes for dark meat. Drain on paper towels and let cool for 5 minutes before serving.



LA FROMAGERIE DU COMTAT

CARPENTRAS, FRANCE

“It’s this exquisite little shop in a very non-touristy town with some of the best cheese around. Claudine Vigier, the *affineur* who runs the shop, is a renowned cheesemaker and wine expert and a second-generation owner. She was trained in cheese from her early days, and it shows.”

—Sue Conley, co-owner with Peggy Smith, Cowgirl Creamery, Point Reyes Station, CA

FRENCH LENTIL SALAD WITH BLUE CHEESE

SERVES 4

COOK TIME: 40 MINUTES

A neutral base of lentil salad lets the pleasant sharpness of the Bleu d’Auvergne cheese, which is aged in sweet wine at La Fromagerie du Comtat, take center stage in this salad from Sue Conley and Peggy Smith. Any creamy cow’s milk blue will work well in its place.

- 2 cups Puy lentils, rinsed
- 1 carrot, peeled and chopped
- 1 small yellow onion, chopped
- 10 tbsp. olive oil
- 5 tbsp. red wine vinegar
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 6 oz. arugula
- 8 oz. Bleu d’Auvergne, sliced 1/4" thick
- 2 tbsp. minced parsley
- 1 tsp. minced thyme
- Lemon wedges, for serving

Combine lentils, carrot, and onion in a 4-qt. saucepan; cover with water and boil. Simmer until lentils are tender, 30 minutes; drain. Whisk 7 tbsp. oil, the vinegar, salt, and pepper together in a bowl. Toss with lentils and set aside. Toss arugula with remaining oil, salt, and pepper; divide between plates and top with lentils, cheese, and herbs. Serve with lemon wedges.



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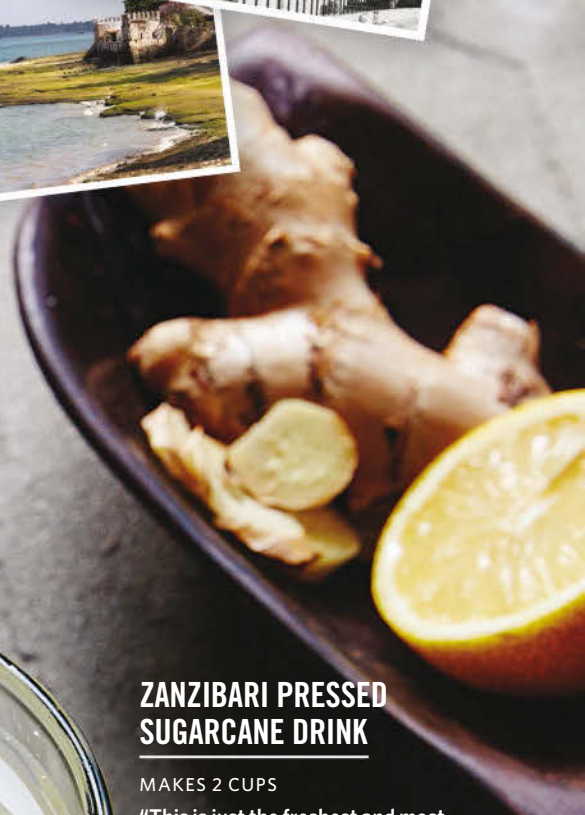


FORODHANI NIGHT MARKET

ZANZIBAR, TANZANIA

“Zanzibar is a port town, and an incredible trading center. Because of that, the food is this blend of coastal African, Indian, and Persian. And that’s just delicious. You can wander around for two hours at the night market eating everything from Persian rice to Indian oats, fresh lobster, and scallops. My favorite is the pressed sugarcane juice.”

—Marcus Samuelsson, chef-restaurateur, Red Rooster Harlem, New York City



ZANZIBARI PRESSED SUGARCANE DRINK

MAKES 2 CUPS

“This is just the freshest and most refreshing juice you can drink, ever,” gushes Marcus Samuelsson about his favorite drink at Zanzibar’s night market. Feel free to add the juice—which, when fermented and distilled, turns into rum—to beer for a sweet cocktail, as some Zanzibaris do, or drink it straight, as shown here, with ginger for added spice. Purée 1 pound peeled and diced sugarcane, 2 cups water, 3 tbsp. fresh lemon juice, and one 1” piece peeled and sliced ginger in a blender for 3 minutes. Strain through a fine-mesh sieve and serve over ice with more sugarcane.

NICOLE FRANZEN, ALLIE WIST (2)

 **Make the Trek**

PARKER’S BBQ

2514 U.S. Highway 301 S., Wilson, North Carolina; 252-237-0972

LA FROMAGERIE DU COMTAT

23 Place Maurice Charretier, Carpentras, France; 011-33-4-9060-0017

RESTAURANTE CALDO DE PIEDRA

Km. 11.9 Carretera Oaxaca al Tule, Tlaxi-tac de Cabrera, Mexico; aldodepedra.com

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Next Stop: Rest Stop

LONG BEFORE SHE OWNED A DRIVER'S LICENSE OR A RESTAURANT—KIN KHAO IN SAN FRANCISCO—A FOOD LOVER BACKSEAT-DROVE HER WAY TO THAILAND'S BEST ROADSIDE TREATS

By Pim Techamuanwitt



From my school on Ploenchit Road, we headed west out of Bangkok, crossing the small canal that divides the old city from the newer part of town. As soon as I saw the bridge, I sat up from my slouch in anticipation, but to my astonishment, our car kept rolling along with traffic.

I had made this trip to Hua Hin, a small beach town a few hours southwest of Bangkok, every summer with my family. But this year, at age eight, I had been kept behind at boarding school for some bit of mischief that I can no longer remember, so

I was getting a ride from family friends after my folks had already taken off.

"Wait, wait!" I cried out. "We must stop here!" I wanted—no, I *needed*—to get the fried bananas, *kluay tod*, sold a block beyond the bridge. Indulging me, they turned the car around. A vendor approached our window with two bags of freshly fried baby bananas, coated in a light batter of rice flour, sesame seeds, and dried coconut. I was quiet for a little while, just a little while, munching on that crisp, sweet fruit.

Leaving Bangkok behind, we entered the Chao Phraya river delta, where coconut and palm trees thrive. The area is famous for a special treat, *khanom jaak*, made with chunks of the nipa palm's translucent, jellylike fruit, freshly grated co-

conut, and sticky rice flour and sweetened with local palm sugar. Wrapped in long palm leaves, fragrant slabs of the chewy mixture are roasted over charcoal until caramelized. The best *khanom jaak* maker was just off the side of the road by the entrance to a small temple. And, of course, it was up to me to remind everyone in the car that we couldn't possibly pass it by.

On and on this went, with me pointing out places where we had to stop, until, finally, we reached the village in Phetchaburi Province, just a stone's throw from Hua Hin. It's a busy market town lined with shop houses selling the province's specialty, *khanom mor gaeng*, a sweet, eggy custard made with taro root (elsewhere it was made with mung bean and not quite as delicious). Again I asked them to stop the car. Resigned to their fate as prisoners to a ravenous, insatiable eight-year-old, my parents' friends pulled over.

They marched into the first shop, hoping to get this latest snack out of the way, since the normally three-hour trip had now taken more than five. But that particular shop was not the best one. The best one was two shops down on the left, I told them.

After devouring the creamy, sweet *khanom mor gaeng*, I had to buy one last thing. There was a *pla muek yang* cart just off to the right, before we got back into the car, where an old man grilled fresh squid on charcoal while a dirty dog, his fur all matted up, slept at his feet. I walked up and handed the man some money. He took it and quickly plucked a few squid from the charcoal, depositing them into a banana leaf cup. Then he reached into a ceramic jar and spooned a generous amount of sticky, garlicky, spicy, tangy sauce all over the squid, dumped a big handful of peanuts on top of everything, and added a few bits of cilantro. He handed me the banana leaf cup and a wooden stick for skewering the squid.

As I walked back to the car, my parents' friends looked over my newest acquisition. "Are these grilled squid the best ever, too?" they asked, exasperated. "No, not really," I replied. "It's my favorite thing to eat, but I can only buy it when my mother isn't looking. She thinks the dog is too dirty."

For the author's version of *pla muek yang*, go to saveur.com/thai-squid.



MY MOM DIDN'T HAVE MANY OPTIONS. TODAY'S LUNG CANCER PATIENTS DO.

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STRAWBERRY RHUBARB REVISITED



A time-tested flavor combo yields the freshest desserts for spring

April's first fruits—sweet, juicy strawberries and tart rhubarb—combine for the season's most thrilling pairing. Okay, technically, but only technically, rhubarb is not a fruit (it's a vegetable), and, while we're at it, the strawberry is not actually a berry (it's what botanists call a pseudofruit). But together, this sweet-tart odd couple of vegetable and not-berry can be the stars, we discovered, in much more than simple pies.



↖
Chef Jen Yee finds that the water content of 2 percent yogurt yields the best texture for these pops, but you can substitute whole-milk yogurt.

Strawberry Rhubarb Yogurt Pops

MAKES 8-10 POPS

COOK TIME: ABOUT 4 HOURS 15 MINUTES

Chef Jen Yee at New York City's Lafayette restaurant makes these refreshing and not-too-sweet icy treats.

- 1 lb. strawberries, hulled and minced
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup fresh orange juice
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. kosher salt
- 3 stalks rhubarb, trimmed and minced
- 4 oz. plain 2 percent Greek yogurt
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup honey, preferably orange blossom

Bring strawberries, juice, salt, and rhubarb to a simmer in a 4-qt. saucepan; cook until fruit begins to break down, 3–4 minutes. Let cool and, using a slotted spoon, transfer $\frac{1}{2}$ cup fruit to a bowl. Transfer remaining fruit mixture to a blender; add yogurt and honey and purée until smooth. Stir in reserved fruit; divide mixture between individual ice-pop molds. Freeze 1 hour, then insert a popsicle stick into each mold; freeze until pops are solid, about 3 hours more. To release ice pops from molds, briefly run the bottom of the molds under warm water.

Cheesecake with Charred Rhubarb Compote and Sliced Strawberries

SERVES 10-12

COOK TIME: ABOUT 5 HOURS

Pastry chef Anna Posey of Chicago's Publican blackens rhubarb in a wood-fired oven for the cheesecake's compote topping. A standard oven will also do the trick.

For the crust:

- 5 tbsp. unsalted butter, melted, plus more for greasing
- 6 oz. graham crackers
- 1 tsp. sugar
- 1/4 tsp. freshly grated nutmeg
- 1/4 tsp. kosher salt

For the filling:

- 1/2 cup sour cream
- 3 8-oz. packages cream cheese, softened
- 1 1/4 cups sugar
- 2 tbsp. unsalted butter, softened
- 4 eggs, room temperature

- 2 tbsp. dark rum
- 1/2 tsp. kosher salt
- 1 vanilla bean, split lengthwise, seeds scraped and reserved

For the rhubarb compote and garnish:

- 1 1/2 lb. rhubarb, trimmed and sliced 1/4" thick
- 1 1/2 cups sugar
- 1 vanilla bean, split lengthwise, seeds scraped and reserved
- 2 tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- Sliced strawberries, for garnish

1 Make the crust: Heat oven to 375°. Grease a 9" (3"-deep) springform pan with butter. Pulse graham crackers in a food processor into fine crumbs. Add melted butter, sugar, nutmeg, and salt; pulse to combine and press mixture into bottom and 1/2" up the sides of pan. Bake until set, 6-8 minutes, and cool. Wrap outside of pan with aluminum foil; transfer to a roasting pan.

2 Make the filling: Reduce oven to 325°. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with a paddle, beat sour cream and cream cheese on high until smooth. Scrape down sides of bowl and add sugar and butter; mix on

medium until combined. With the motor running, add eggs, one at a time, mixing well after each addition. Add rum, salt, and vanilla bean and seeds; mix until combined and pour into prepared crust. Pour enough boiling water into roasting pan to come halfway up the side of springform pan; bake until filling jiggles slightly in the center when the pan is tapped on the side, 50 minutes to an hour. Remove springform pan from water bath and let cool completely; chill until set, 3-4 hours.

3 Make the rhubarb compote: Heat oven broiler. Arrange rhubarb in a single layer on a greased, foil-lined baking sheet; broil until slightly charred, 6-8 minutes, and transfer to a 4-qt. saucepan. Add sugar and vanilla bean and seeds; cook over medium-low until rhubarb breaks down and sauce thickens to a jamlike consistency, about 30 minutes. Stir in lemon juice; let cool and discard vanilla bean. Spread compote over cheesecake and garnish with strawberries; chill 1 hour before serving.

The charred rhubarb compote can be chilled in an airtight container for up to two weeks. It's also lovely over ice cream or waffles.



Strawberry Rhubarb Hand Pies

MAKES 7 PIES
COOK TIME: ABOUT
2 ½ HOURS

For these portable fruit pies, Georgia-based chef-restaurateur Hugh Acheson uses rice wine vinegar to make the flavors pop. He prefers it over other vinegars because it has a touch of sweetness that matches well with strawberries.

For the dough:

- 2 cups flour, plus more for dusting
- 1 tbsp. sugar
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 16 tbsp. unsalted butter, cubed and chilled
- 2 tbsp. whole milk
- 2 eggs

For the filling:

- 1 tbsp. unsalted butter
- 5 oz. strawberries, hulled and roughly chopped
- 2 oz. rhubarb, peeled and roughly chopped
- 3 tbsp. sugar

- ½ tbsp. rice wine vinegar
- ¼ tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- ¼ tsp. fresh lemon juice
- Pinch kosher salt

1 Make the dough: Whisk flour, sugar, and salt in a bowl. Using a dough blender, two forks, or your fingers, cut butter into flour mixture, forming pea-size crumbles. Whisk milk and 1 egg in a separate bowl and add to flour mixture; work dough until smooth but with visible flecks of butter. (Alternatively, pulse ingredients in a food processor.) Flatten dough into a disk and wrap in plastic wrap; chill at least 1 hour before using.

2 Make the filling: Melt butter in a 2-qt. saucepan over medium. Cook strawberries and rhubarb until soft and jamlike, 6–8 minutes. Stir in sugar, vinegar, pepper, lemon juice, and salt; cook 3 minutes more. Let cool to room tem-

perature, then cover and chill at least 30 minutes before using.

3 Assemble and bake the pies: On a lightly floured surface, roll dough ¼" thick. Trim edges to make a 10"x12" rectangle. Cut dough into six 4"x5" rectangles; gather dough scraps, re-roll, and cut one more rectangle. Place 2 tbsp. filling in center of each rectangle. Whisk remaining egg in a bowl and brush edges of rectangles; fold one short side of dough over the other, encasing the filling. Crimp edges using a fork. Transfer pies to parchment paper-lined baking sheets and chill 20 minutes. Beat remaining egg; cover and chill.

4 Heat oven to 400°. Using a fork, prick tops of pies; brush tops with the remaining beaten egg. Bake pies until golden, about 20 minutes; let cool slightly before serving.

"Strawberries have a natural affinity for black pepper. I like contrasting their sweetness with some bite."
—Hugh Acheson



Storage Wars

The high water content and thin permeable skins of strawberries account for their juiciness, but also make them more susceptible to going bad quickly. Damp conditions are the enemy of freshness. To stave off spoilage, don't wash strawberries until you're ready to use them. Line a colander or shallow dish with paper towels and store strawberries in a single layer, uncovered. That will keep the delicate fruits dry and allow air to circulate around them.



The leftover sugar topping for these elegant jellies is also delicious sprinkled on tropical fruits like mango, papaya, and pineapple.

"PÂTES DE FRUITS ARE THE PICKLES OF THE SWEET WORLD—A GREAT WAY TO PRESERVE SEASONAL PRODUCE AT ITS PEAK."

—William Werner, Craftsman and Wolves

Strawberry Rhubarb Pâte de Fruit

MAKES 8 DOZEN PIECES
COOK TIME: ABOUT 5 ½ HOURS

Instead of coating his pâte de fruit with plain sugar, William Werner of San Francisco's Craftsman and Wolves flavors Demerara sugar with Clément Créole Shrub, a spiced liqueur made of aged and white Agricole rums and bitter orange peels. It adds a clean, bright flavor to the glittering topping.

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup Demerara sugar
1 vanilla bean, split

- lengthwise, seeds scraped and reserved
- 1 oz. Clément Créole Shrub or Cointreau (astorwines.com)
 - 1 tbsp. canola oil, for greasing
 - 12 oz. rhubarb, trimmed and roughly chopped
 - 3 cups granulated sugar
 - 7 oz. strawberries, hulled
 - $1\frac{1}{2}$ tbsp. light corn syrup
 - $2\frac{1}{2}$ tbsp. yellow (apple) pectin (lepicerie.com)
 - 1 tbsp. fresh lemon juice

1 Heat oven to 200°. Stir Demerara sugar and vanilla seeds in a bowl; sprinkle with Shrub and toss to com-

bine. Spread sugar evenly on a parchment paper-lined baking sheet; bake with the oven door ajar until dried, about 30 minutes. Let sugar cool and then crumble.

2 Grease a 9"x13" parchment paper-lined baking dish with oil; set aside. Cook vanilla bean, rhubarb, and 1 cup granulated sugar in a 4-qt. saucepan over medium-high until rhubarb has broken down, 8–10 minutes. Let cool and discard vanilla bean; transfer mixture to a blender. Add strawberries and corn syrup and purée until smooth; return mixture to pan and boil. Whisk 3 tbsp. granu-

lated sugar and the pectin in a bowl; sprinkle over fruit mixture and stir until sugar has dissolved, 1–2 minutes. Add remaining granulated sugar in three batches; cook, stirring well after each addition, until sugar has dissolved and mixture has thickened, about 5 minutes, or until an instant-read thermometer reads 175°. Stir in lemon juice and pour mixture into prepared pan; let sit at room temperature until set, about 4 hours. Cut pâte de fruit into 1" squares; coat in reserved Demerara-Shrub sugar. Store in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 1 month.

The Road to

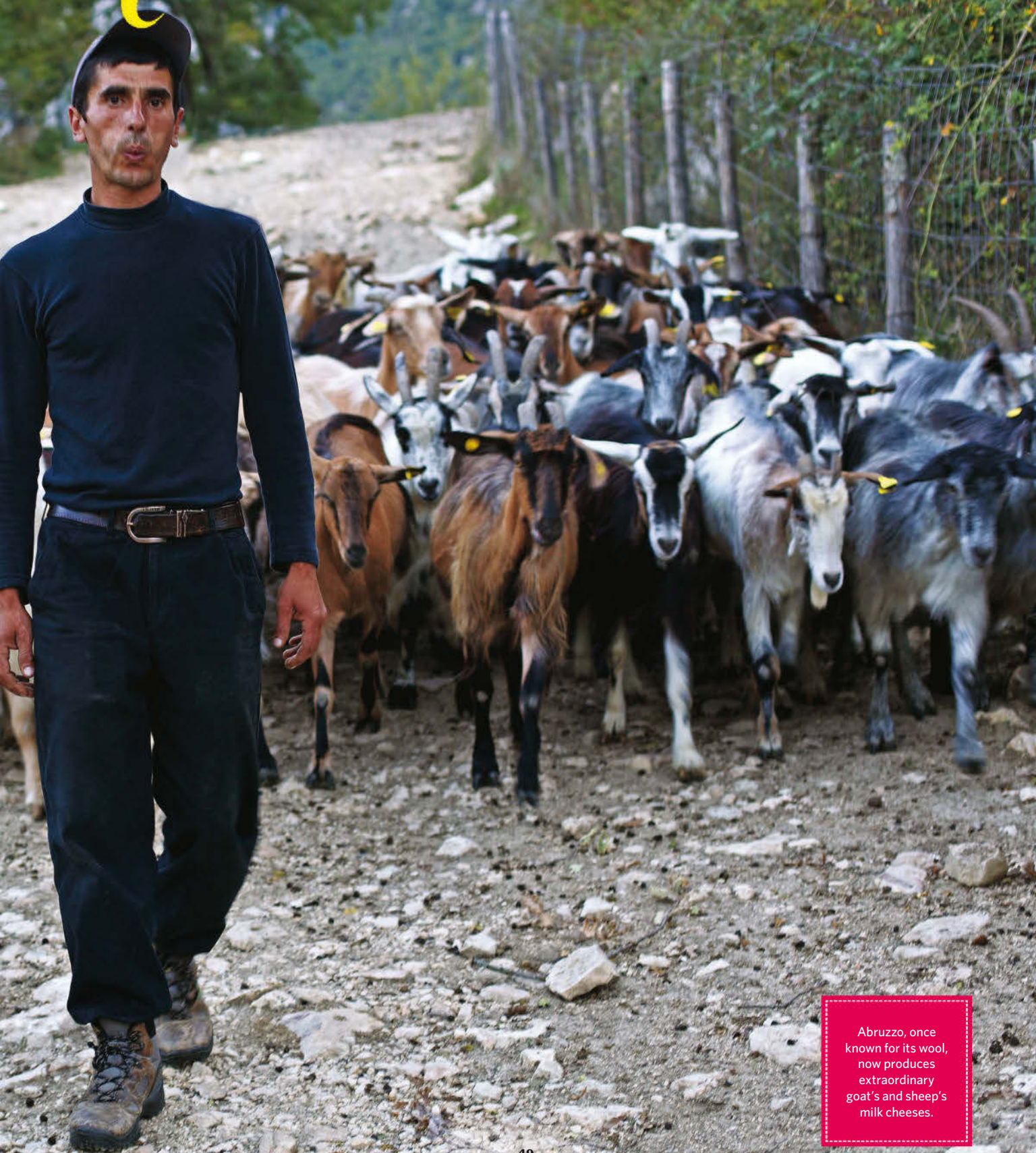
Just an hour and a half northeast of Rome, in the lightly touristed, barely touched region of Abruzzo, modern-day shepherds follow ancient roads, winemakers prefer unheralded grapes, and feasting is at the center of everyday life

BY ADAM LEITH GOLLNER

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MICHAEL JAMES O'BRIEN



Abruzzo



Abruzzo, once known for its wool, now produces extraordinary goat's and sheep's milk cheeses.



E

very so often, a car cautiously serpentine down the winding hillside road away from the ancient hamlet of Ofena, in Italy's Abruzzo region. It's not the sort of drive you rush: Every downward curve opens onto yet another vista of superabundant grandeur. The views here

in the Gran Sasso e Monti della Laga National Park are of such unrelenting picturesqueness it seems only right that the roadside benches are turned *away* from the landscape, toward Ofena's unprepossessing buildings. The locals sitting there appear relieved to be resting their eyes from the ceaselessly breathtaking Apennine postcard unfurling behind them.

For at least a thousand years, the local tradition of *transumanza*—the seasonal movement of flocks of sheep and goats from mountains to grazing pastures and back again—has been practiced up and down these rocky slopes. "Abruzzo *is* transumanza," baron Luigi Cataldi Madonna tells me, when I meet him at his winery in the valley beneath Ofena. "It's the soul of Abruzzo. Everything comes back to the transumanza: the food we eat, the wine we drink, the lives we lead."

Cataldi Madonna is a legendary figure in these parts. A winemaker, a professor of philosophy at the Università dell'Aquila, and a passionate history buff, he makes sure to point out that the road that brought me here is very much like the pathways that shepherds have walked for centuries. Winemaking is the other ancient tradition. Here, in the amphitheater-like valley known as "the oven of Abruzzo," air from the Adriatic Sea blows in over the hills, bringing with it a coating of salinity that seems to impregnate



Cataldi Madonna's grapes with oceanic freshness.

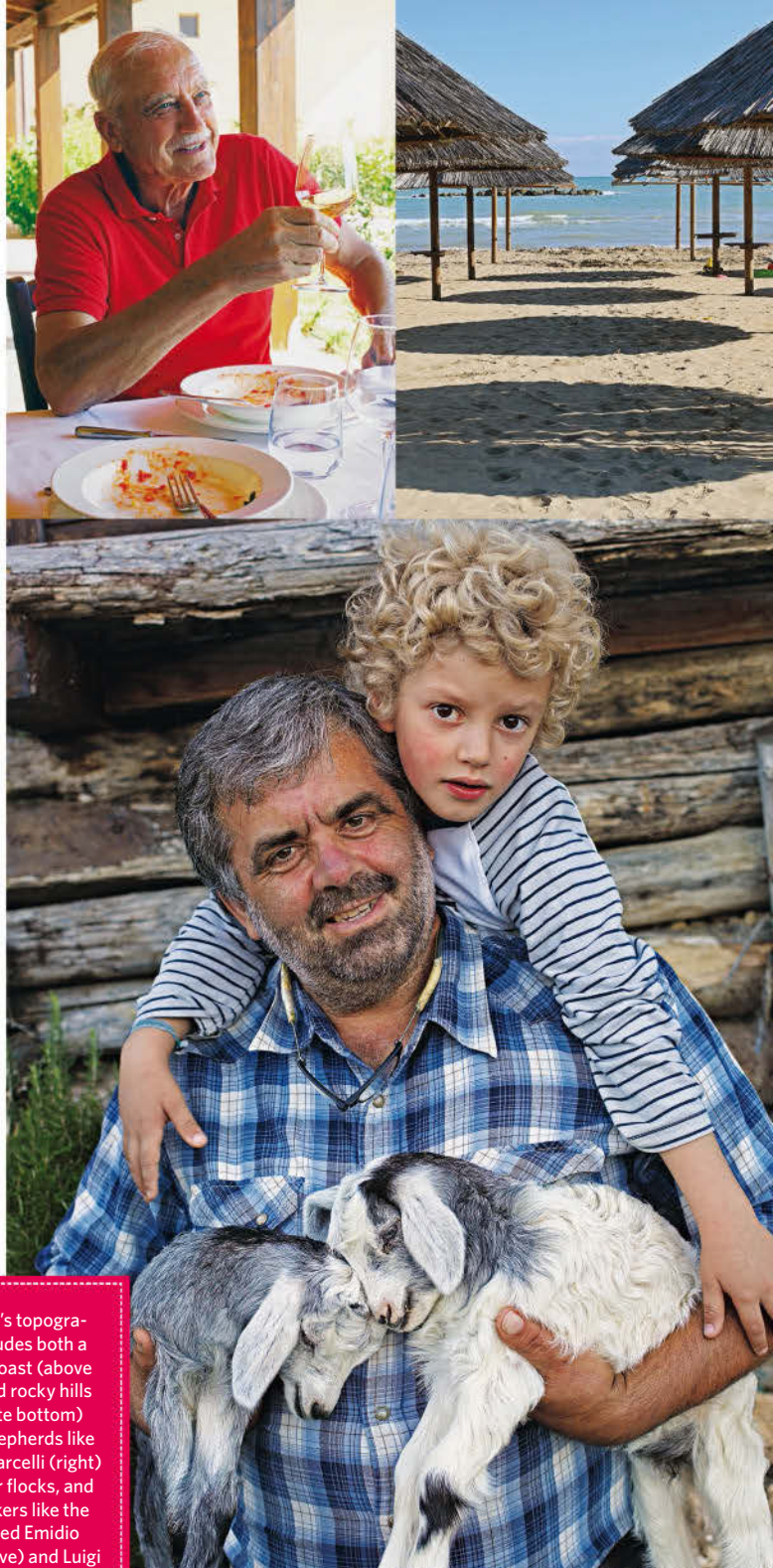
Cataldi Madonna is largely responsible for rescuing a previously unheralded grape variety called pecorino that is now in vogue across Italy. (The name derives from the Italian word for "sheep," a nod to the shepherds—and their flocks—who ate the grapes while traveling through the region.) His bright, lemony wines are ideal with food, as I learn when he brings out some *pasta cresciuta*—puffy disks of fried pizza dough—as well as platters of cheese, homemade cold cuts, offal sausages, salads, and olives. I make an aside about this being a *panarda*, a traditional feast in the region, but Cataldi Madonna waves off my suggestion. "The panarda is not just a meal," he says, "it's a celebration. It starts early in the evening and finishes the morning after. There are dozens of dishes—always an odd number, that's very important." According to Cataldi Madonna, soups, lamb dishes, ravioli, and a ton of fava beans are integral to the feast, which honors St. Anthony, the patron saint of farmers and shepherds. "The panarda is a ritual of excess here in the countryside," he says. "And the dishes of the panarda are all dependent on the transumanza."

This place is defined by a still-evident link to the tradition of moving around to find and grow food. The sheep move to eat. The people of Abruzzo eat to celebrate. And I, a visitor in a rental car, plan to drive up and down these hills and honor the precedent they set.

Nobody I knew had ever been to Abruzzo before. When I told Roman friends where I was headed, they said things like, "That's the deep, *deep* countryside." They couldn't understand the appeal, which seemed surprising, given its proximity to Rome (L'Aquila, the capital, is an hour and a half away by car) and the fact that many Roman recipes, starting with *spaghetti alla carbonara* and *bucatini all'amatriciana*, are purportedly from Abruzzo. The existence of a still-hidden region in such an overrun corner of the world clearly merited deeper investigation.

Leaving Rome, my rental car bobbed its way through a sea of Fiats and Alfa Romeos, but after a while I bore right onto the A24 and all the other cars stayed to the left. I breezed along with barely anyone else on the road, past medieval castles perched on rocky hillsides, undulating valleys rolling out to infinity, and Himalayan-high mountains with snowy shoulders.

When I arrive in the port of Pescara, a bustling urban center on the Adriatic's golden coast, my first stop is Taverna 58, a bastion of traditional Abruzzan cooking. The owner is a dapper, white-haired gentleman named Giovanni Marrone, who greets customers with a friendly, reserved demeanor.



Abruzzo's topography includes both a beachy coast (above right) and rocky hills (opposite bottom) where shepherds like Nunzio Marcelli (right) tend their flocks, and winemakers like the renowned Emidio Pepe (above) and Luigi Cataldi Madonna (his nephew, opposite top) produce their distinctive bottles.





In Abruzzo, meaty dishes take lighter forms, like a sweet, lean lamb ragù (above) and a rich yet delicate broth with crêpes (right). See page 53 for recipes.



Spaghetti alla Chitarra with Lamb and Sweet Pepper Ragù

(Ragù d'Agnello e Peperoni)

SERVES 6-8; PHOTO ON PAGE 52
COOK TIME: 1 HOUR 10 MINUTES

Lighter than the rich beef and pork ragùs of other Italian regions. Here, bell peppers are mixed into the sauce and cooked briefly so they retain their shape and lend a pop of sweetness. It is typically served over spaghetti alla chitarra (pasta from Abruzzo that is shaped on a tool that resembles a guitar), though it makes a delicious sauce for almost any type of long noodle.

- 1/2 cup olive oil
- 1 lb. ground lamb
- 3 bay leaves
- 3 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1/2 cup dry white wine
- 1 1/2 cups lamb or chicken stock
- 1 (15-oz.) can whole peeled tomatoes, crushed by hand
- 2 large red bell peppers, stemmed, seeded, and sliced 1/4" thick
- 1 large yellow bell pepper, stemmed, seeded, and sliced 1/4" thick
- 1 lb. spaghetti alla chitarra (eataly.com) or thick spaghetti
- Grated Pecorino Romano, for garnish

1 Heat oil in a 6-qt. saucepan over medium-high. Cook lamb, stirring and breaking up meat into small pieces, until browned, 6-8 minutes. Add bay leaves, garlic, salt, and pepper; cook until garlic is golden, 2-3 minutes. Stir in wine; cook until reduced by half, 2-3 minutes. Add stock, tomatoes, salt, and pepper; bring to a simmer. Reduce heat to medium-low; cook, stirring occasionally, until sauce is slightly thickened, 35-40 minutes. Stir in peppers; cook until peppers are tender but not falling apart, 4-6 minutes. Discard bay leaves.

2 Meanwhile, bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Cook pasta until al dente, 10-12 minutes. Drain pasta and transfer to pan with sauce. Add salt and pepper and, using tongs, toss pasta in sauce. Divide pasta between bowls; garnish with pecorino.

Crespelle en Brodo

(Broth with Crêpes)

SERVES 6-8; PHOTO ON PAGE 52
COOK TIME: ABOUT 5 HOURS

The key to producing this robust, deeply golden-hued broth, from winemaker Emidio Pepe's wife, Rosa, is taking the time to properly brown the chicken wings and beef bones. The rendered fat develops sucs, or fond, the browned bits of meat left in the pan that increase the broth's flavor.

For the brodo:

- 2 tbsp. olive oil
- 3 lb. chicken wings
- 1 lb. beef bones, cut into 2" pieces (ask your butcher to do this)
- 2 carrots, roughly chopped
- 2 large yellow onions, roughly chopped
- 2 stalks celery, roughly chopped
- 1 clove garlic, unpeeled, crushed
- 3 sprigs parsley
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 plum tomato, cored and halved

For the crespelle and serving:

- 1/4 cup minced parsley, plus more
- 5 tbsp. flour
- 1 tbsp. grated parmesan, plus more
- 1 tbsp. olive oil
- 1/4 tsp. freshly grated nutmeg
- 5 eggs
- Freshly ground black pepper, for serving

1 Make the brodo: Heat oil in a large saucepan over medium-high. Working in batches, cook chicken wings and beef bones until browned, 35-40 minutes; transfer to a bowl. Add carrots, onions, celery, and garlic to pan; cook until golden, 6-8 minutes. Return wings and bones to pan. Add parsley, bay leaf, tomato, and 20 cups water; simmer, skimming as needed, for 4 hours. Strain through a fine-mesh sieve into a clean saucepan; keep warm.

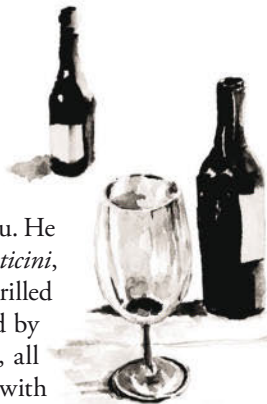
2 Make the crespelle: Whisk parsley, flour, parmesan, oil, nutmeg, eggs, and 1 cup water in a bowl until smooth. Heat an 8" nonstick skillet over medium-high. Working in batches, pour 2 tbsp. batter into skillet while tilting skillet to let batter cover bottom completely. Cook until crespelle is golden on the bottom, 1-2 minutes. Flip and cook 1 minute more; transfer to a plate. Roll each crespelle into a cigar shape. To serve, divide crespelle cigars between shallow bowls and ladle reserved brodo over top; garnish with parsley, parmesan, and pepper.

He assures me that the best way to sample various facets of *la tradizione* is by getting a tasting menu. He starts by sending out *arrosticini*, a local specialty of flame-grilled mutton skewers, followed by charcuteries and terrines, all of which pair splendidly with a Montepulciano d'Abruzzo by the legendary winemaker Emidio Pepe. Older vintages of Pepe's wines are the ones more likely to make their way to the U.S., fetching hundreds of dollars per bottle, but one of the joys of coming to Italy is that Pepe sells young vintages of his earthy, bold, untamed wine in abundance here, and at much lower prices.

With the stage set, the main course arrives, Taverna 58's chicken "in porchetta style." The recipe begins with chicken marinated in olive oil, honey, fresh rosemary, salt, and white wine. When it's ready, the chef ties it up like a porchetta, using raffia to wrap it around bamboo rods, and grills it. As good as it is, juicy with crackling skin, the *pièce de résistance* for me comes at the end of the meal, when Marrone wheels a cart to the table and whips up some fresh zabaglione with marsala—"con grande passione," as he puts it.

The next day, crossing more *regi tratturi* (centuries-old *transumanza* pathways), I drive southwest to meet Nunzio Marcelli, president of the Abruzzo Shepherds Association. I've never met a shepherd before, let alone an alpha shepherd president. I suppose I'd been visualizing a man leaning on a wizened hazelnut crook wearing a long gray cloak, but when Marcelli comes out to greet me, he strolls over in a simple polo shirt and jeans. Even shepherds have Casual Fridays, it seems—although Marcelli assures me that many traditions remain intact here. "Just wait until you try our cheeses," says Marcelli, a bearded, tanned, potato-fingered outdoorsman.

After we amble around his rustic *agriturismo*—filled with sheep, goats, chickens, dogs, and children—we join a colleague of Marcelli's bringing a herd of goats down the hill. The shepherd's job is to keep his flocks healthy and protect them from predators (these woods are still home to bears, wolves, and wild boars). Historically, the region was known for wool, but today, sheep and goats are mainly used for culinary purposes, as



I BREEZE ALONG WITH BARELY ANYONE ELSE ON THE ROAD, PAST MEDIEVAL CASTLES PERCHED ON ROCKY HILLSIDES, THE UNDULATING VALLEYS ROLLING OUT TO INFINITY



I learn over dinner with Marcelli and his family. We try juniper-smoked ricottas, goat yogurt pecorinos, and award-winning caciocavallos made with *pezzata rossa* cow's milk. Marcelli's daughter Viola prepares homemade gnocchi in a saffron-ricotta sauce, and we end with a local gentian root digestivo and Aurum, an orange liqueur produced in Pescara since 1925.

Dinner confirms something I've sensed while traveling throughout Abruzzo. Since so many people harvest their own fruit here and folks like Marcelli age their own cheeses, grow their own vegetables, and make their own pastas and olive oils, I realize that if some form of global economic meltdown were to come, not only would Abruzzans be fine, but life would continue pretty much just as it is.

I forge onward, into the Apennine mountains and over to Vasto, the birthplace of *brodetto alla vastese*, a celebrated local fish soup that is bursting with Mediterranean seafood and shellfish. A trip up the golden coast is one of the most beautiful drives in all of Italy, especially if it ends at the Emidio Pepe winery.

I arrive in the middle of harvest time, so Pepe himself brings me straight to the vineyards, where his workers are picking dazzling gold bunches of ripe trebbiano grapes. Now 82 years old, Pepe is a chiseled, strong-backed, handsome man who radiates calm and focus. He is famously quiet, but his pretty 22-year-old granddaughter, Chiara, couldn't be more outgoing, and she shows me around as Emidio busies himself in the field.

"We have a lot of biodiversity here," Chiara says, pointing out the sunflower plantings and fruit trees surrounding us. She draws my attention to the little clumps of wild herbs growing at our feet: parsley, mint, thyme. "We didn't plant these," she clarifies. "They just showed up here. We often find 'spontaneous vegetables' growing in the vineyard, things like swiss chard and fennel." As she speaks, happy little lizards scamper around in the vines and butterflies flit through the honeyed light. Being there immediately makes me understand the slogan on the back of their family's wine bottles: "*Con il vino PEPE, hai la 'VITA' dentro.*" It means: "A wine by PEPE has LIFE inside of it." How could their bottles not be full of life when their vineyard feels like a nature preserve?

Swiss Chard with Borlotti Beans

(*Verdure con Fagioli*)

SERVES 6-8; PHOTO ON PAGE 55
COOK TIME: 2 HOURS 25 MINUTES,
PLUS OVERNIGHT SOAKING

Winemaker Emidio Pepe's wife, Rosa, folds sautéed garlic and aromatic vegetables into this brothy beans-and-greens side dish to add body and an earthy depth.

- 2 cups dried borlotti or cranberry beans, soaked overnight and drained
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 7 lb. Swiss chard, trimmed, leaves and tender stems roughly chopped
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup olive oil
- 1 tsp. crushed red chile flakes
- 12 cloves garlic, roughly chopped
- 4 stalks celery, cut into $\frac{1}{4}$ " pieces
- 3 carrots, cut into $\frac{1}{4}$ " pieces
- 1 medium yellow onion, cut into $\frac{1}{4}$ " pieces
- 2 cups chicken or vegetable stock

Boil beans and 6 cups water in a 6-qt. saucepan. Reduce heat to medium-low; cook, covered, until beans are tender,

about 2 hours. Drain beans; set aside. Fill saucepan with salted water; boil. Cook chard until wilted and stems are tender, 4-6 minutes; drain and transfer chard to an ice bath until chilled, and then drain and squeeze dry. Add $\frac{1}{4}$ cup oil and the chile flakes to saucepan; heat over medium. Cook garlic, celery, carrots, and onion until golden, 8-10 minutes. Add reserved beans and chard, the stock, salt, and pepper; simmer until stock is slightly reduced, 6-8 minutes. Transfer to a serving dish; drizzle with remaining oil.

Porchetta-Style Chicken

SERVES 4-6; PHOTO ON PAGE 55
COOK TIME: ABOUT 2 HOURS

Inspired by the traditional pork classic, tender marinated chicken breasts are spread with garlic paste, herbs, and salty pancetta before being rolled and grilled in this recipe adapted from one used at Taverna 58, a restaurant in the seaside town of Pescara.

- 2 1- $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. boneless, skin-on double (attached) chicken breasts
- 1 cup dry white wine
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup olive oil

- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup honey
- 3 tbsp. kosher salt, plus more to taste
- 2 tbsp. minced rosemary, plus $\frac{1}{4}$ cup packed leaves
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. freshly ground black pepper, plus more to taste
- 3 lb. Yukon Gold potatoes, peeled and cut into 1" pieces
- 12 cloves garlic (6 peeled and smashed, 6 mashed into a paste)
- 1 tbsp. ground fennel
- 3 oz. (about 12 slices) thinly sliced pancetta
- Butcher's string, for tying

1 Using the flat side of a mallet, pound flesh side of chicken until $\frac{1}{4}$ " thick; set aside. Whisk wine, $\frac{1}{3}$ cup oil, the honey, 3 tbsp. salt, the minced rosemary, and $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. pepper in a bowl. Add chicken and toss to coat; cover with plastic wrap and chill 1 hour.

2 Heat oven to 400°. Toss remaining oil, the rosemary leaves, potatoes, smashed garlic, salt, and pepper on a baking sheet. Roast, stirring as needed, until golden and just cooked, about 1 hour; keep warm.

3 Meanwhile, heat a charcoal grill or set a gas grill to medium-high. (Alternatively, heat a cast-iron grill pan over medium-high.) Remove chicken from marinade and pat dry. Place 1 piece chicken skin side



See page
54 for
recipes.

Juicy porchetta-style
chicken with crisp
charred skin pairs
well with a stewy
side of Swiss chard
and borlotti beans.



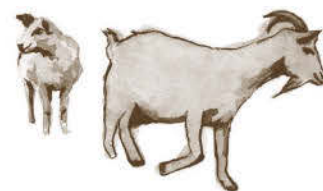
Beef-and-pork-stuffed fried olives (left, see page 57 for recipe) and focaccia studded with sweet grapes (above, see page 58 for recipe) are some of the Pepe family's favorite starters when they entertain at their winery.

“These vines are full of fireflies in the evening,” Chiara tells me. “That’s significant because fireflies are delicate—they avoid anything that has been sprayed with chemicals. We respect nature here.”

For dinner, Emidio’s wife, Rosa, prepares a number of family specialties. She starts with a tray of grape-studded focaccia; then comes a dish of fried olives (*oliva all’ascolana*) stuffed with ground beef and pork. “My grandmother says this is one of the three recipes I will need to learn how to make or else I will never get married,” Chiara mentions.

Next I sample a classic *timbale*, in which layers of flat pasta sheets are quickly boiled, then covered with a veal-spinach mixture and tomato sauce with mozzarella, and then stacked. The lasagna-like dish pairs sensationally with Emidio’s cerasuolo, as well as with a plate of Rosa’s *verdure con fagioli*, freshly picked borlotti beans with Swiss chard from the garden. The final recipe in the matrimonial trinity is a venerable classic called *mazzarelle*: it’s like dolmas filled with lamb’s liver, heart, and lung. Rosa braises them for a few hours in white wine, to an entirely alchemical result.

As we eat, we try some of Emidio’s older vintages. His 2001 is leathery, spicy, full of vitality. “This wine is at the service of



conquering eternity,” Emidio declares, taking a sip. Then we have the 1983. When he vinified it, Emidio considered it such a terrible vintage that he didn’t sell it. Yet today, 32 years later, it has blossomed. “The horse that is hard to break wins the race,” Emidio says of the bottle.

Around the dining room table are three generations of Pepes, from kids to grandparents. Someone runs into the kitchen singing “That’s Amore” (really). At times the conversation breaks into passionate fireworks, with everyone hollering about the

economy, or politics, or the proper way of preparing a certain dish. Rosa keeps looking over at me and telling me that I haven’t eaten enough, even though I certainly have.

I say goodnight to the Pepes and head to my room at their *agriturismo*. Before going to bed, I open my window and look out into the night, filling my lungs with the purity of it all. The temperature has dropped but the crickets are still chirping away. Pulsing lights in the distance catch my eye. It takes me a moment to figure out what they are, but then I see—the vineyard is full of fireflies, twinkling away faintly, like stars.

down on a work surface. Rub flesh side of chicken with half the garlic paste and fennel, salt, and pepper. Lay half the pancetta, overlapping slightly, over top. Working from one long side, roll chicken into a tight package and secure using butcher’s string. Repeat with remaining piece of chicken, garlic paste, fennel, salt, pepper, and pancetta. Season outsides of chicken with salt and pepper; grill, turning as needed, until skin is slightly charred and crisp, 8–10 minutes. Place chicken on potatoes; roast until

potatoes are tender and chicken is cooked through, or an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part of the chicken reads 165°, 30–35 minutes. Let chicken rest 5 minutes, then remove string and slice ¼” thick crosswise; serve over potatoes.



Fried Stuffed Castelvetrano Olives

(*Oliva all’Ascolana*)

SERVES 4–6; PHOTO ON PAGE 56
COOK TIME: ABOUT 35 MINUTES

Olives are stuffed with a simple beef and pork filling and fried for a more substantial snack in this recipe from winemaker Emidio Pepe’s wife, Rosa.

- 12 oz. (about 40) Castelvetrano olives (wholefoods.com)
- 3 oz. ground beef
- 2 oz. ground pork
- 2 tbsp. grated parmesan
- ¼ tsp. freshly grated nutmeg
- 1 egg yolk, plus 1 whole egg
- Zest of 1 lemon, finely grated
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Canola oil, for frying

- 2 tbsp. whole milk
- 1½ cups bread crumbs
- ½ cup flour

1 Pit olives by lightly crushing them individually with the flat side of a chef’s knife; discard pits, leaving olives as intact as possible. Mix beef, pork, parmesan, nutmeg, yolk, lemon zest, salt, and pepper in a bowl. Divide mixture into forty ½ tsp. balls. Stuff 1 ball of meat mixture into each olive; press olive around filling to seal.

2 Heat 2” oil in a 4-qt. saucepan until a deep-fry thermometer reads 375°. Whisk whole egg and milk in a bowl. Place bread crumbs and flour in separate bowls. Working in batches, roll olives in flour, dip in egg mixture, and coat in bread crumbs; fry until crisp and filling is cooked through, 3–4 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer olives to paper towels; season with salt.



Abruzzo-Style Grape Focaccia

SERVES 10-12;

PHOTO ON PAGE 56

COOK TIME: 2 HOURS 10 MINUTES

When this fluffy, oil-slathered dough bakes, the red and green grapes dotting it burst, releasing their sweet juices into the bread. The recipe is from Chiara Pepe, granddaughter of winemaker Emidio Pepe.

- 1/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for greasing and brushing
- 1 cup whole milk
- 5 cups flour
- 2 tsp. kosher salt
- 1 1/4-oz. package active dry yeast
- 6 oz. seedless green and/or red grapes
- Maldon flake sea salt, to taste

1 Grease a 13"x18" rimmed baking sheet and set aside. Heat milk and 1 cup water in a 1-qt. saucepan over medium until an instant-read thermometer reads 115°. Pulse flour, kosher salt, and active dry yeast in a food processor to combine. With the motor running, slowly add milk mixture and olive oil; mix until a smooth dough forms. Transfer dough to a lightly greased bowl and cover loosely with plastic wrap; set in a warm spot until the dough has doubled in size, about 1 hour.

2 Transfer dough to prepared baking sheet and, using your fingers, spread dough out to the edges until it completely covers the bottom. Using your fingertips, press dough all over to form dimples; press grapes into the dough, spaced about 1 1/2"-2" apart. Brush dough with olive oil and sprinkle with sea salt; let dough sit, uncovered, until puffed, about 45 minutes.

3 Heat oven to 400°. Bake focaccia until golden brown and cooked through, about 25 minutes. Let cool slightly before serving.

TRAVEL GUIDE: ABRUZZO

WHERE TO STAY

Emidio Pepe Agriturismo

Opened two years ago, the seven double rooms and two little apartments here at the legendary Emidio Pepe winery are all furnished in modern continental and classic styles. Wine tastings, cellar visits, and dinners with wine pairings are by reservation. *Via Chiesi, 10, Torano Nuovo; emidiopepe.com*

La Bandiera

It seems that everyone in Abruzzo knows about La Bandiera, widely considered to be the best "fancy" place in the province. The food downstairs is contemporary and stylish, yet rooted in Abruzzan traditions and narrative. The rooms for rent upstairs are nice, clean, and—best of all—more affordable than those in most suitable hotels you'll find in Italy. *Contrada Pastini 4, Civitella Casanova; labandiera.it*

WHERE TO EAT

Sapori di Campagna

Just up the hill from Luigi Cataldi Madonna's vineyards is this family-run country inn. It focuses on homestyle cucina d'Abruzzo, using historically important ingredients like saffron from the nearby Navelli plain and lentils from across the valley in Santo Stefano di Sessanio. *Contrada Colonia Frasca, KM. 7800, Ofena; saporidicampagna.com*

Taverna 58

Located on the cobblestone street where poet Gabriele D'Annunzio was born (his *casa natale* is a museum open to the public), Taverna 58 is the old-school, tradition-obsessed trattoria we all dream of one day finding. Let the maître d'hôtel, Giovanni Marrone, guide you to whatever he selects. He knows his stuff, growing much of the raw materials in his own vegetable garden. *Corso Gabriele Manthonè, 46, Pescara; taverna58.it*

WHERE TO SHOP

Valle Scannese

Crossing the Escher-esque gorge from shepherd Nunzio Marcelli's farm in Anversa, you come to the ancient town of Scanno. It is eminently worth the detour. Stop in to dine, sleep, or simply buy some of the best formaggi in Abruzzo at bioagriturismo Valle Scannese. Cheesemaker Gregorio Rotolo is known for a soft, magnificent pecorino-style cheese called Gregoriano, as well as fresh ricottas and other raw dairy specialties you'll never find anywhere else. *Località Le Prata, Scanno; vallescannese.com*

ILLUSTRATIONS BY SHANA TOROK



One of many picturesque hamlets that dot the road between L'Aquila and Ofena.



VIVA
GREAT MEXICO

ON THE CALIFORNIA

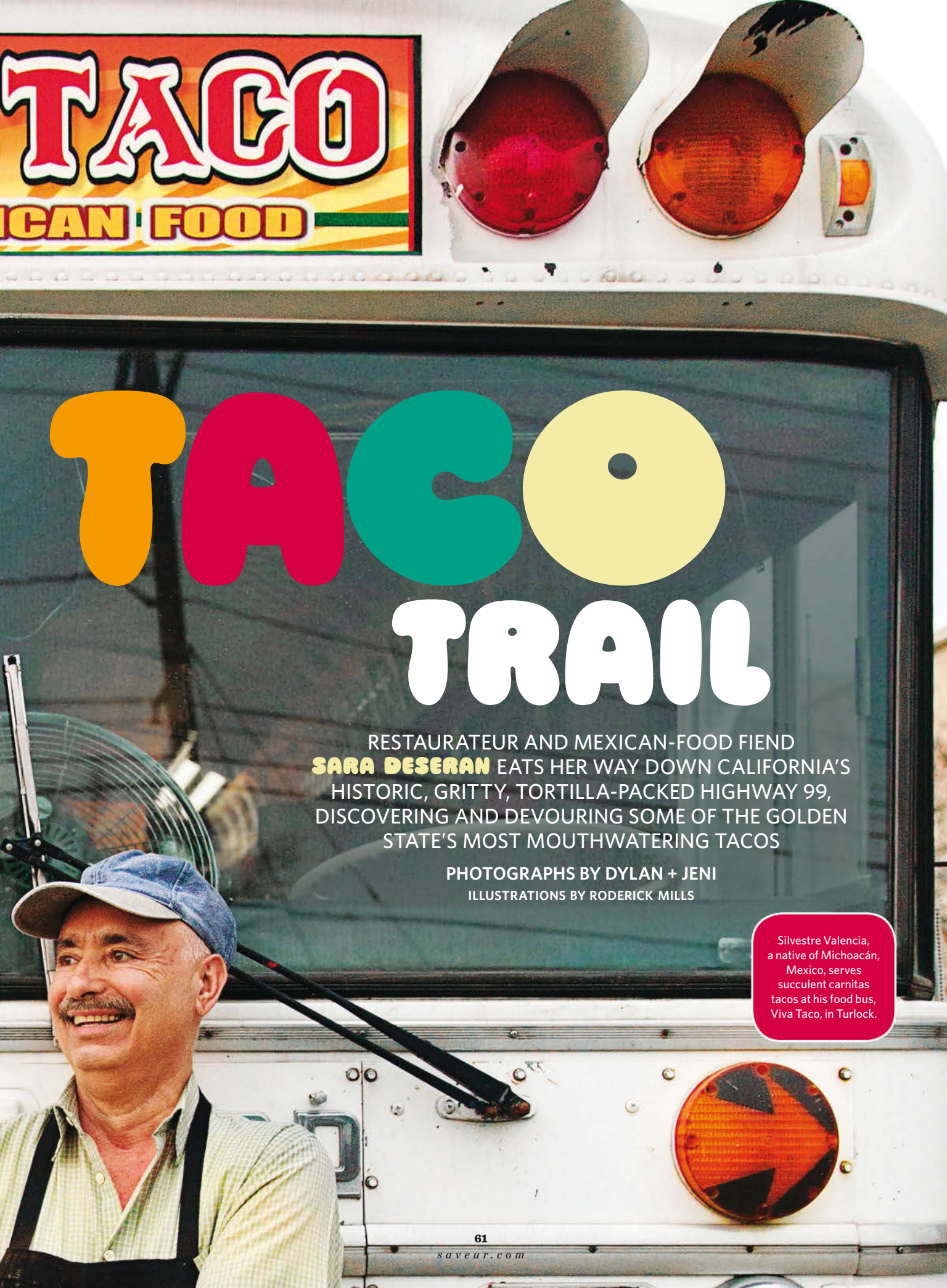
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TACO
MEXICAN FOOD

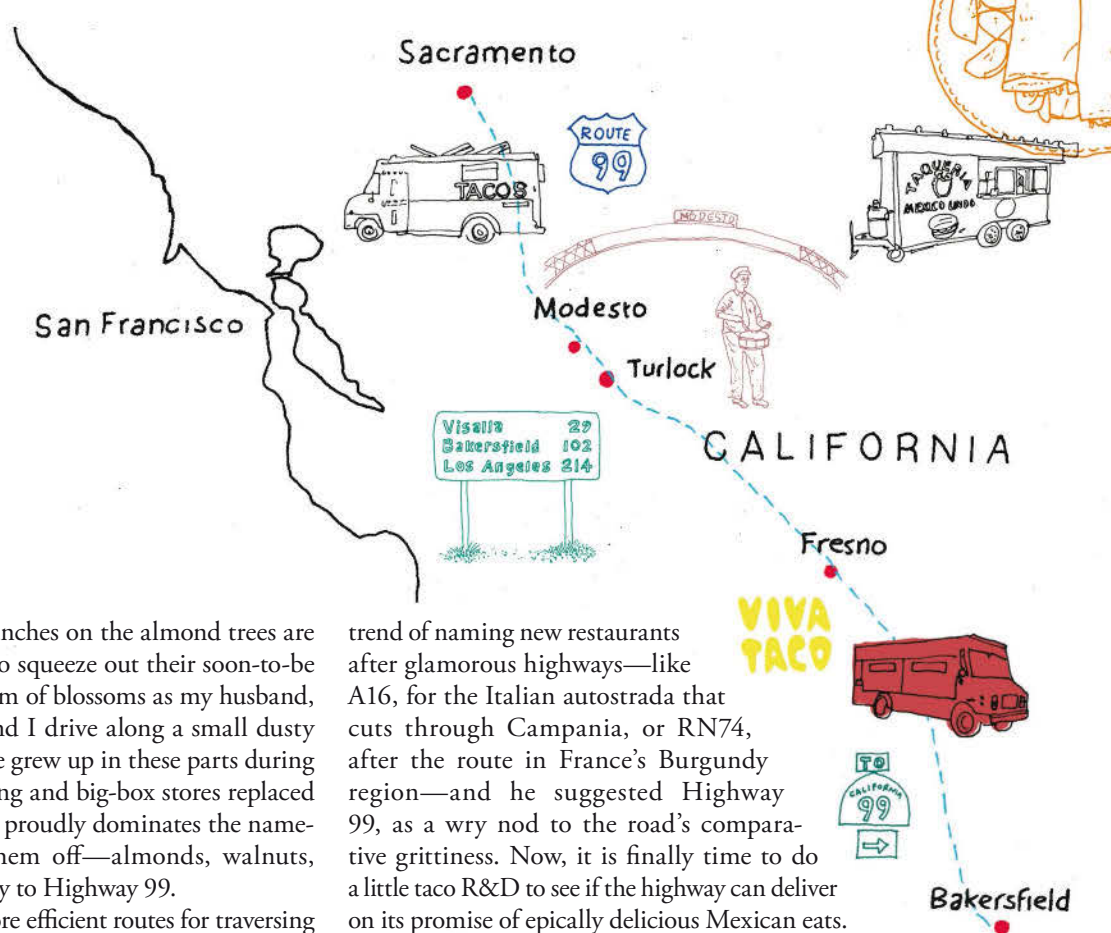
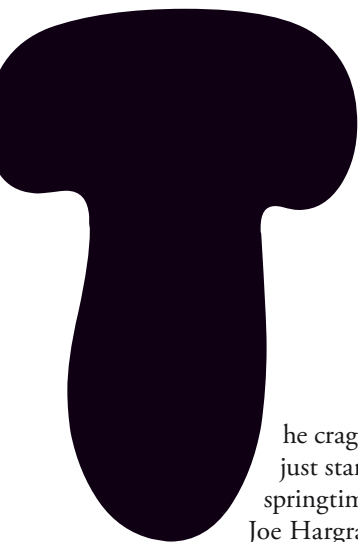
TACO TRAIL

RESTAURATEUR AND MEXICAN-FOOD FIEND
SARA DESERAN EATS HER WAY DOWN CALIFORNIA'S
HISTORIC, GRITTY, TORTILLA-PACKED HIGHWAY 99,
DISCOVERING AND DEVOURING SOME OF THE GOLDEN
STATE'S MOST MOUTHWATERING TACOS

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DYLAN + JENI

ILLUSTRATIONS BY RODERICK MILLS

Silvestre Valencia,
a native of Michoacán,
Mexico, serves
succulent carnitas
tacos at his food bus,
Viva Taco, in Turlock.



he craggy branches on the almond trees are just starting to squeeze out their soon-to-be springtime storm of blossoms as my husband, Joe Hargrave, and I drive along a small dusty road in central California. Joe grew up in these parts during the 1970s, before tract housing and big-box stores replaced a sea of orchards, and he still proudly dominates the name-that-tree game. He ticks them off—almonds, walnuts, apricots—as we make our way to Highway 99.

Although there are now more efficient routes for traversing central California, State Route 99, also called the Golden State Highway, used to be the chosen one. It was the main thoroughfare from Mexico to Canada, and a straight shot through the Central Valley, California's 22,500-square-mile fertile crescent, which cranks out more than half of the nation's produce. Here, Dust Bowlers from the Plains sought jobs and arable soil during the Great Depression, and, more recently, Mexicans, about 14 million strong across the state, have proved integral to the area's agronomic success. In their communities throughout the Valley, they have also cultivated and perfected their very own version of Mexico's greatest culinary gift—the taco. Joe and I are on a 48-hour, 276-mile road trip down 99, from Sacramento to Bakersfield, to discover the very best of them.

One turn onto 99 is reminder enough that we're not doing a *Two for the Road*-type jaunt across Europe. The truck-laden freeway is jammed with semis transporting everything from live honeybees to tangerines. We whizz by Jack in the Boxes and RV dealerships. JESUS SAVES billboards meet RAIN FOR RENT signs, a constant reminder of California's drought.

It's a trip six years in the making. Joe and I own four restaurants in the Bay Area called Tacolicious. It's a silly, love-it-or-hate-it kind of name. But when we launched in the summer of 2009 as a stand at the Ferry Plaza Farmers Market, Joe wanted to rebel against the San Francisco

trend of naming new restaurants after glamorous highways—like A16, for the Italian autostrada that cuts through Campania, or RN74, after the route in France's Burgundy region—and he suggested Highway 99, as a wry nod to the road's comparative grittiness. Now, it is finally time to do a little taco R&D to see if the highway can deliver on its promise of epically delicious Mexican eats.

First stop: Chando's in Sacramento. Owner Lisandro "Chando" Midrijal spent a decade in Tijuana while his dad ran a tortilleria there, but after his family moved to America, he grew up in Marysville, about 40 miles north of the capital. In 2010, after his father passed away, Midrijal left his job as a salesperson at Apple.

"I started by catering in people's backyards," he tells me. He grew the business into a modest window-order operation and now runs three locations, popular enough that I'd been warned to get there early.

We're greeted by the smoky scent of carne asada grilling on a *parrilla*. Out back, the patio is furnished with tables and strung with party lights, making me wish it were a sweltering Sacramento summer

night instead of a mild spring morning. I try every one of the six tacos on the menu. They're all fabulous, but it's the Yucatán-style *cochinita pibil*—the pork shoulder dripping with brick red achiote-stained juice and topped with crunchy pickled onions and slices of habanero chiles—that gets me.

Joe coaxes me back into the car, and we drive for a half-hour to Taqueria Mi Lindo Apatzingan—a yellow-and-orange '70s-style restaurant next to a laundromat, owned by the Hermosillo sisters from Michoacán, Mexico. There, in the suburb of Rio Linda, I chase savory chicken tacos with a gargantuan stein of ice-cold, spicy (continued on page 66)

Joe and I are on a
**48-HOUR,
276-MILE**
road trip down
99 to discover the
very best tacos



Spicy michelada at Taqueria Mi Lindo Apatzingan in Rio Linda.

Spicy Michelada

MAKES 1 COCKTAIL

For this take on a classic beer cocktail from Taqueria Mi Lindo Apatzingan in Rio Linda, Tajín (a Mexican seasoning blend of dried chiles, lime, and salt) adds both heat and tang. To make the drink, place 2 tbsp. Tajín seasoning (amazon.com) on a small plate. Run a lime wedge around the rim of a tall beer glass; dip rim into Tajín and fill glass with ice. Dip three 1/4"-thick slices cucumber into Tajín and place on rim of glass. Add 2 oz. tomato juice, 1 oz. fresh lime juice, 1 tsp. hot sauce, 1/2 tsp. Tajín, 1/4 tsp. kosher salt, and 3 dashes Maggi seasoning to glass. Add a chilled 12-oz. bottle Mexican lager, such as Negra Modelo; stir to combine. Garnish with cooked shrimp, if you like.



Goat birria from La Elegante in Fresno.



Devouring a shrimp taco at Don Pepe Taqueria in Fresno.



Pork and pineapple tacos from El Mercado Super in Fresno.

Goat Birria

(Jalisco-Style Goat Stew)

SERVES 6-8; PHOTO ON PAGE 63

COOK TIME: ABOUT 3 ½ HOURS

A low-and-slow cooking technique used for this *birria*, which colloquially means “a mess,” ensures that the meat is fork-tender and the tomatillo broth infused with a rich, meaty flavor. Swap pork for goat, if you prefer.

- 1 dried guajillo chile, stemmed
- 1 cup boiling water
- 8 tomatillos, husked and cored
- 5 cloves garlic, unpeeled
- 1 medium white onion, halved (one half minced)
- 1 serrano chile, stemmed
- ¼ cup cider vinegar
- 2 tsp. dried oregano, preferably Mexican
- ½ tsp. ground cinnamon, preferably Mexican
- ½ tsp. ground cumin
- ¼ tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- 1 2"-piece ginger, peeled and thinly sliced
- 2 tbsp. canola oil
- 3 lb. bone-in goat shoulder, cut into 3" pieces (ask your butcher to do this)
- Kosher salt, to taste
- 1½ cups chicken stock
- ½ cup roughly chopped cilantro
- Corn tortillas, warmed, for serving
- Lime wedges, for serving

1 Heat a 6-qt. Dutch oven over medium-high. Add guajillo chile; cook, flipping once, until lightly toasted, 3–4 minutes. Transfer to a blender, add water, and let sit until soft, about 30 minutes. Remove chile, discard stem and seeds, and return to blender; set aside. Return pot to medium-high; cook tomatillos, garlic, whole onion half, and serrano, turning as needed, until blackened all over, 12–15 minutes. Peel garlic and transfer to blender with remaining charred vegetables. Add vinegar, oregano, cinnamon, cumin, pepper, and ginger; purée until smooth.

2 Add oil to pan; heat over medium-high. Season goat with salt and, working in batches, cook, turning as needed, until browned, 18–20 minutes. Transfer goat to a bowl; set aside. Add minced onion; cook until soft, 2–3 minutes. Add reserved chile sauce; simmer until thickened, 4–6 minutes. Return goat to pan and add stock; boil. Reduce heat to medium; simmer, covered and stirring occasionally, until goat is tender, about 2 hours. Using a slotted spoon, transfer goat to a cutting board. Let cool slightly; shred meat, discarding bones, and return to pan. Stir in cilantro; serve with tortillas and lime wedges.



Don Pepe's shrimp taco (left); Lisandro "Chando" Midrijal at his eponymous restaurant in Sacramento.



Shrimp Tacos

SERVES 6

COOK TIME: ABOUT 1 ½ HOURS

Every element of this taco—inspired by those at Don Pepe Taqueria in Fresno—is amped up, from the red rice simmered in a blend of chicken stock and puréed tomatoes to the quick-marinated shrimp. Use large flour tortillas as tacos or wrap them into a burrito.

For the salsa and guacamole:

- 5 chiles de árbol, stemmed and seeded
- ¼ cup boiling water
- 5 plum tomatoes (4 cored, 1 minced)
- 4 cloves garlic (2 unpeeled, 2 minced)
- 2 serrano chile (1 stemmed, 1 minced)
- ⅓ cup roughly chopped cilantro
- ¼ tsp. sugar
- 1 small white onion, minced
- Kosher salt, to taste
- 2 tbsp. fresh lime juice
- 1 ripe avocado, peeled, pitted, and mashed

For the rice:

- 1½ cups chicken stock
- 2 plum tomatoes, cored and roughly chopped
- 2 tbsp. canola oil
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 small white onion, minced
- 1 cup long-grain white rice
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

For the shrimp and serving:

- 1½ lb. medium shrimp, peeled and deveined, tails removed
- 1 tsp. Worcestershire sauce
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- Juice of 1 lime
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 2 tbsp. canola oil
- Flour tortillas, warmed, for serving
- Shredded jack cheese, for serving

Roughly chopped cilantro and white onion, for garnish
Lime wedges, for serving

1 Make the salsa and guacamole: Heat a 12" skillet over medium-high. Cook chiles de árbol until lightly toasted, 1–2 minutes, and transfer to a blender; add water and let sit 10 minutes. Meanwhile, cook 4 cored tomatoes, unpeeled garlic, and stemmed serrano, turning as needed, until charred all over, 8–10 minutes; transfer to a plate and let cool. Peel garlic and seed serrano; transfer to blender with charred tomatoes. Add half the cilantro, the sugar, half the onion, and salt; purée until smooth and set salsa aside. Stir minced garlic, tomato, and serrano, the remaining cilantro and onion, the lime juice, avocado, and salt in another bowl; cover guacamole and chill.

2 Make the rice: Purée stock and tomatoes in a blender until smooth; set aside. Heat oil in a 4-qt. saucepan over medium-high. Cook garlic and onion until soft, about 5 minutes. Add rice; cook until golden, about 6 minutes. Stir in reserved tomato mixture, salt, and pepper; boil. Reduce heat to low; cook, covered, until rice is tender, 25–30 minutes. Remove from heat and let sit, covered, for 10 minutes.

3 Make the shrimp: Stir shrimp, Worcestershire, garlic, lime juice, salt, and pepper in a bowl; let sit 10 minutes. Wipe skillet clean; heat oil over medium-high. Working in batches, cook shrimp until pink and cooked through, 2–3 minutes. To serve, divide rice and shrimp between tortillas; top with reserved salsa and guacamole, the cheese, cilantro, and onion. Serve with lime wedges.

BAKERSFIELD



Cochinita Pibil Tacos

(Yucatán-Style Shredded Pork Tacos with Achiote)

SERVES 8-10

COOK TIME: ABOUT 4 HOURS

Pibil is the Mayan word for the type of traditional oven—little more than a hole filled with heated stones, on top of which leaf-wrapped meats are cooked—that was once prevalent in the Yucatán. This *pibil* recipe, inspired by one used at Chando's in Sacramento and prepared in a Dutch oven, pops with earthy achiote paste and citrus juices, yielding a luscious, spicy pulled pork.

- 4 oz. achiote paste, such as El Yucateco (mexgrocer.com)
- 1 cup fresh lime juice
- 1 cup fresh orange juice
- 1 1/3 cups white vinegar
- 3 tbsp. dried oregano, preferably Mexican (mexgrocer.com)
- Kosher salt, to taste, plus 2 tsp.
- 4 lb. boneless pork shoulder, cut into 2" pieces
- 2 (28"-long) banana leaves
- 2 cups boiling water
- 1 medium red onion, thinly sliced
- 4 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
- 2 habanero peppers, thinly sliced
- 1 bay leaf
- Corn tortillas, warmed, for serving
- Roughly chopped cilantro, sliced radishes, and lime wedges, for serving

1 Make the pork: Combine achiote paste, lime and orange juices, 1/2 cup vinegar, and the oregano in a blender; season with salt and purée until smooth. Strain marinade through a fine-mesh sieve into a bowl; add pork and toss to combine. Line the bottom of a 6-qt. Dutch oven with banana leaves, letting the excess hang over the side of the pot. Add pork and its marinade; fold leaves over pork and place lid on pot; bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low; cook until pork is tender, about 2 1/2 hours.

2 Meanwhile, stir water and onion in a bowl; let sit 3 minutes and drain. Stir in remaining vinegar, 2 tsp. salt, the garlic, habaneros, and bay leaf; cover and let sit at room temperature for at least 1 hour before serving.

3 Unwrap and transfer pork to a cutting board; shred into bite-size pieces and transfer to a bowl. Stir in 1 cup cooking liquid from the pot. To serve, divide pork between tortillas; top with pickled onion mixture, the cilantro, and radishes. Serve with lime wedges.



THE SUN IS setting in shades of rainbow

(continued from page 62) michelada garnished with thick, chile-encrusted cucumbers and fat shrimp. The drink is almost a meal in itself. And it's only 11:30 in the morning.

A

fter whiling away the better part of the day in Modesto, Joe's hometown, where we scarf down cabeza tacos made of tender cow's head on handmade tortillas at El Mexicano on the town's taco-packed Eighth Street, we finally break away and drive southeast down 99. The same sun that envelopes you like a 105-degree sauna in the summer is

just now starting to set in shades of rainbow sherbet, crop dusters swooping down over the flat fields. Route 99 is not a stone-cold stunner, but it has an undeniable, and unsentimental, beauty to it.

We pull off the highway in Turlock and into a gravel lot to find a gray school bus. Viva Taco, run by Silvestre Valencia, who opened the food bus 14 years ago, is an eat-in restaurant with a ceiling of quilted stainless steel and a counter. Valencia is a kind, soft-spoken man who immigrated here a long time ago from Michoacán. He is limping, wearing a back brace, and in obvious pain.

"I hurt my back last year in an accident," he explains, "but I don't have the money to pay for surgery." Yet he is working, as he often does, by himself. I can't tell if it is Valencia or his succulent and tender carnitas taco that breaks my heart just a little bit.

The next morning we wake up in Fresno, one of the most rapidly expanding cities in the Valley. In the elevator, someone cheerily asks me if I am there for the soil convention. Happily, Joe and I are headed to Don Pepe Taqueria, where, at not yet 11 a.m., men in bucket cowboy hats wait in line next to young guys sporting white socks to the knee and sleeves of tattoos. The modest spot is known for spicy shrimp tacos: flour tortillas wrapped around sweet shrimp, creamy rice, shredded cheese, guacamole, and—if you're smart—piquant chile de árbol salsa. As I pour some onto my taco, I ask owner Andre de Anda, a man with Paul Newman blue eyes, if it's traditional.

"They serve something like it in my hometown of Guadalajara," he says, and rattles the recipe off the top of his head—chile de árbol, lemon, sugar, salt, garlic, and some pickled jalapeño juice. I scribble it down in a notebook for later, ever grateful for the kindness of strangers.

The next person we meet up with is

technically a stranger, though he doesn't feel like one; I've been corresponding with him for weeks now. At La Elegante, in Fresno's faded Chinatown, we meet Mike Osegueda, the enthusiastic organizer of the annual Fresno Taco Truck Throwdown. There are bars on the windows, but inside, the cozy, pumpkin-colored space is crammed full of chatter, abuelitas chowing down next to cops. At Osegueda's recommendation, we order the goat *birria*, a traditional slow-cooked stew. It arrives, the simple, fragrant broth packed with impossibly tender chunks of goat meat that we all inhale.

Before we bid farewell to Fresno, Osegueda suggests we stop at a spiffy Mexican grocery store called El Mercado Super, which proudly shows off its *trompo*, or vertical spinning rotisserie, with al pastor. At the counter I order a coconut agua fresca (I'm a huge fan of coconut), which turns out to be a natural pairing for the al pastor. I wash down big bites of ruddy crisped pork and chunks of charred sweet pineapple with swigs of the creamy, refreshing drink and wonder why it's taken me so long to make this trip.

Flying past dairy cows and vivid green alfalfa fields in the shadow of the snow-capped Sierras, we turn off 99 into Earlimart. Aldo's taco truck is a hard-to-miss green-and-yellow affair parked next to the David Lynch-ish Earlimart Motel. At the nearby gas station, a tumbleweed rolls by; a city girl, I snap a picture. I stand on tippy-toes to order a carne asada taco at the window and it arrives, a thing of beauty with chunky grilled onions and pickled jalapeños. I can only half-finish it. It's my 16th taco in the last 24 hours, after all.

Passing Merle Haggard Drive and \$40-a-night motels, the sky batiked with evening light and clouds, we push on to Bakersfield. "To a stranger driving 99 in an air-conditioned car... these towns must seem so flat, so impoverished, as to drain the imagination," wrote Joan Didion in *Slouching Towards Bethlehem*. I'm proud to not be a stranger any longer.

We roll up to our final joint, Loncheria Otro Rollo, a little red trailer parked next-door to a gas station, where Guadalajara native Raquel Casillas makes her specialty: potato tacos. They are the reason I've made the trek. At the red-and-white checked table moments later, we come face-to-face with hot, deep-fried tortillas folded over mashed potatoes, all smothered in a salsa ranchera, with cabbage, *queso fresco*, and radishes on top. Joe and I each take a bite of the crispy, creamy, saucy tacos and look at each other as only two singularly taco-minded people can. The unspoken word: "Bingo."

A week later, our version of these tacos makes it onto the Tacolicious menu. We call them Tacos de Papa Hwy 99.

Taco Guide

WHERE TO EAT DOWN ROUTE 99

Aldo's

1164 N. Front St., Earlimart;
661-667-1501

Chando's

863 Arden Way, Sacramento;
chandostacos.com

Don Pepe Taqueria

4582 N. Blackstone Ave., Fresno;
taqueriaddonpepe.com

El Mercado Super

4707 E. Belmont Ave., Fresno;
559-452-0135

El Mexicano

Eighth St., Modesto

La Elegante

1423 Kern St., Fresno; 559-497-5844

Loncheria Otro Rollo

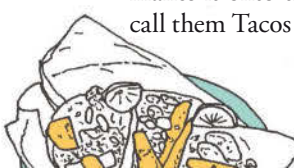
2525 White Lane, Bakersfield;
661-342-3813

Taqueria Mi Lindo Apatzingan

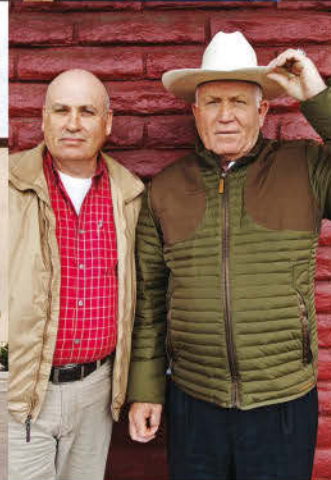
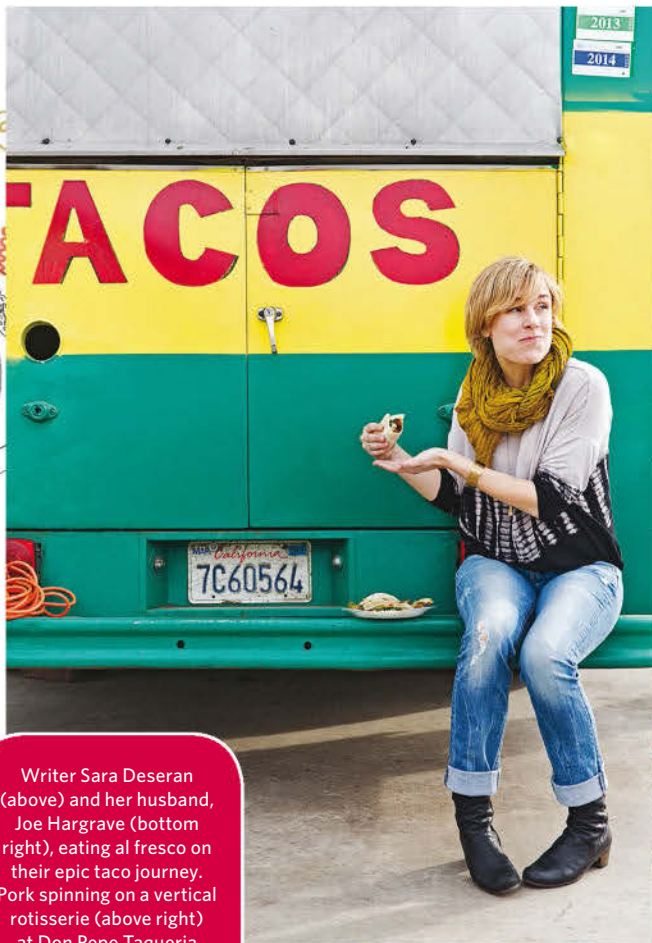
928 Oak Lane, Rio Linda; 916-991-2577

Viva Taco

49 W. Canal Drive, Turlock;
209-678-3899



sherbet, crop dusters swooping down over the flat fields



Writer Sara Deseran (above) and her husband, Joe Hargrave (bottom right), eating al fresco on their epic taco journey. Pork spinning on a vertical rotisserie (above right) at Don Pepe Taqueria in Fresno, owned by Andre de Anda (without hat, at right), and juicy carnitas tacos (below) at Viva Taco in Turlock.





Horchatas, a type of Mexican agua fresca, are traditionally made with rice; here, coconut milk adds tropical notes. (See page 69 for recipe.)



The subtle, almost sweet flavor in these crispy potato tacos (Tacos de Papa Hwy 99, see page 69 for recipe) makes them the perfect vehicle for smoky salsa.



DON PEPE'S
**Chile de
Árbol Salsa**

Delicious yet deadly, this bright red sauce, adapted by Sara Deseran from the one served at Fresno's Don Pepe Taqueria, is great on meat or fish. To make it, place 1 oz. stemmed and seeded chiles de árbol and 1 cup boiling water in a blender; let sit until chiles are softened, about 20 minutes. Add 1 tbsp. each fresh lemon juice and sugar, 2 tsp. kosher salt, 2 cloves peeled garlic, and a splash of pickled jalapeño juice, if you like. Purée until smooth. Makes about 1 cup.



Carnitas Tacos

(Michoacán-Style Braised Pork Tacos)

SERVES 8-10; PHOTO ON PAGE 67
COOK TIME: ABOUT 2 ½ HOURS

At the Viva Taco bus in Turlock, Silvestre Valencia adds jalapeño pickling liquid to the pork braise, which tenderizes the meat and keeps it from drying out.

For the carnitas:

- 3 tbsp. lard or canola oil
- 3 lb. skinless, bone-in pork shoulder, cut into 3" pieces (have your butcher do this)
- Kosher salt, to taste
- ¾ cup whole milk
- 8 cloves garlic, peeled and smashed
- 6 canned or jarred whole pickled jalapeños, plus ⅓ cup pickling liquid
- 1 large white onion, roughly chopped
- Juice of 2 limes and 2 oranges

For the salsa and serving:

- 6 tomatillos, husked and cored
- 3 cloves garlic, peeled
- 2 plum tomatoes, cored
- 1 canned or jarred whole pickled jalapeño, stemmed, plus 3 tbsp. pickling liquid, plus more jalapeños for serving
- Kosher salt, to taste
- Corn tortillas, warmed, for serving
- Roughly chopped cilantro and thinly sliced radishes, for garnish
- Orange wedges, for serving

1 Make the carnitas: Melt lard in an 8-qt. saucepan over medium-high. Season pork with salt; cook, turning as needed, until browned, 10–12 minutes. Add milk, garlic, jalapeños and pickling liquid, onion, and lime and orange juices; boil. Reduce heat to medium-low; cook, covered, until pork is tender, about 2 hours. Let pork cool and transfer to a cutting board; chop into bite-size pieces. Strain cooking liquid and return to pan; stir in pork and keep warm.

2 Make the salsa and serve: Heat a 12" cast-iron skillet over medium-high; cook tomatillos, garlic, and tomatoes, turning as needed, until blackened all over, 12–15 minutes, and transfer to blender. Add jalapeño and pickling liquid, and salt; purée until smooth. Serve carnitas on tortillas with salsa; garnish with cilantro and radishes. Serve with more pickled jalapeños and the orange wedges.

Tacos de Papa Hwy 99

(Potato Tacos)

SERVES 6; PHOTO ON PAGE 68
COOK TIME: ABOUT 1 HOUR

Inspired by the potato tacos at Loncheria Otro Rollo in Bakersfield, these Tacolicious versions are stuffed with fluffy mashed potatoes and pan-fried until crisp. The accompanying smoky ranchero sauce also would be great as an accompaniment for meat or fish or spooned over eggs.

- 5 tbsp. olive oil
- 6 cloves garlic, roughly chopped
- 1 small white onion, roughly chopped
- 4 canned chipotle chiles en adobo
- 1 (15-oz.) can whole, peeled tomatoes
- Kosher salt, to taste
- 1½ lb. russet potatoes, peeled and quartered
- 2 tsp. ground cumin
- 12 6" corn tortillas
- ½ cup canola oil
- Thinly sliced green and red cabbage and red radishes, for garnish
- Crumbled queso fresco, for garnish

1 Heat 3 tbsp. olive oil in a 2-qt. saucepan over medium. Cook garlic and onion until soft, about 5 minutes; transfer to a blender. Add chiles, tomatoes, and salt; purée until smooth and set sauce aside.

2 Cook potatoes in a 4-qt. saucepan of salted boiling water until cooked through,

about 15 minutes; drain and return to pan over medium. Add remaining olive oil, the cumin, and salt; mash potatoes.

3 Working in batches, place about ¼ cup potato in the center of a tortilla; fold tortilla in half and secure with a toothpick. Heat canola oil in a 12" skillet over medium. Fry tacos, flipping once, until golden and crisp, 2–3 minutes. Discard toothpicks and transfer tacos to a platter; top with reserved sauce, the cabbage, radishes, and queso fresco.

Coconut Horchata

SERVES 4; PHOTO ON PAGE 68
COOK TIME: 5 MINUTES

This version of the classic Mexican rice-based drink, which writer Sara Deseran adapted from one at Fresno's El Mercado Super, is made with a mix of coconut milk and coconut water for a beverage that is both luxurious and refreshing.

- 2 cups boiling water
- 2 cups long-grain white rice
- 1 stick cinnamon, crushed, plus sticks for garnish
- 2 cups unsweetened coconut water
- Cheesecloth, for straining
- 1 cup unsweetened coconut milk
- ⅔ cup sugar
- Pinch kosher salt

Stir water, rice, and cinnamon in a bowl; cover and let sit at room temperature overnight. The next day, transfer rice mixture to a blender. Add coconut water; purée until smooth, 3–4 minutes. Strain through a cheesecloth-lined sieve into a pitcher; cover and chill until ready to serve. Heat coconut milk, sugar, and salt in a 2-qt. saucepan over low; cook until sugar dissolves, about 3 minutes. Let milk cool; stir into rice mixture. Serve in ice-filled glasses; grate fresh cinnamon over top and drop sticks into glasses.





Grilled sweetbreads with lemon (above), sea bass cooking over embers (opposite left), and a refreshing peach salad (right). Recipes start on page 75.



The open road. Endless lunches. Forgotten nicknames.
New York City chef **IGNACIO "NACHO" MATTOS** drives to
a beachside town for a long weekend of wood-fired
feasts and cooking with old friends

an **EATING ADVENTURE** in

URUGUAY

by GABE ULLA photographs by MARCUS NILSSON





bet you idiots didn't even know that Jesus Christ was born in Uruguay."

Ignacio Mattos is on a roll, making up facts about his homeland and entertaining us with mock-rhapsodic commentary as we drive directly from Montevideo's international airport to the first stop on our journey: Bar Arocena, a dusty snack bar near the beach.

"There's much you don't know about these majestic lands," Mattos says. Which is indisputable, as the itinerary he's put together has been light on specifics. The three-day plan consists of a handful of bullet points, with activities ranging from "we could go here" to "maybe we stop at a bar in this area."

About this first stop, though, we are well informed. Mattos has been talking it up since we boarded the plane in New York, where (with the dapper sommelier Thomas Carter) he runs Estela, an always-packed, two-year-old Manhattan restaurant. In Estela's tiny kitchen, Mattos cooks food that's comforting and straightforward, but with deft little surprises here and there that make it alluring and completely his own. It's a bustling downtown spot where the bar is always at least two-deep and the Obamas shared a date night last fall.

Carter's never been to Uruguay before, but he takes the wheel of the rental and somehow we make it to Bar Arocena without incident. We've arrived for our first lesson about this hallowed land, in the form of the massive, mythical *chivito*, the unofficial national sandwich of Uruguay.

Next door to the city's Baroque-inspired, palatial Hotel Carrasco, Bar Arocena is a world apart. It's a narrow dive, and nothing inside—from the ceiling fans to the soccer banners that adorn the walls—seems to have been altered since it opened in 1923. They serve a variety of substantial

dishes 24 hours a day, including *milanesas* (schnitzel, basically) and *entrecôte* steaks to share. But you go to Arocena to face off against the *chivito*, an impressive pile of ham, lettuce, tomato, melted mozzarella, hard-boiled eggs, pickled red peppers, beef tenderloin, pancetta, and mayo.

It's not the first thing you'd think to eat on a hot day. Yet it's somehow a completely energizing ritual: Tackling the thing is precarious and engaging as you parry with it, wondering how many bites it'll take for everything to fall apart. Once it does, you barrel through with your hands, a fork and knife—whatever it takes—intermittently digging into the plate of fries at the center of the table and keeping yourself going the whole way with ice-cold glasses of Patricia Red, the country's popular light lager. The trick, I learn, is never to take a break.

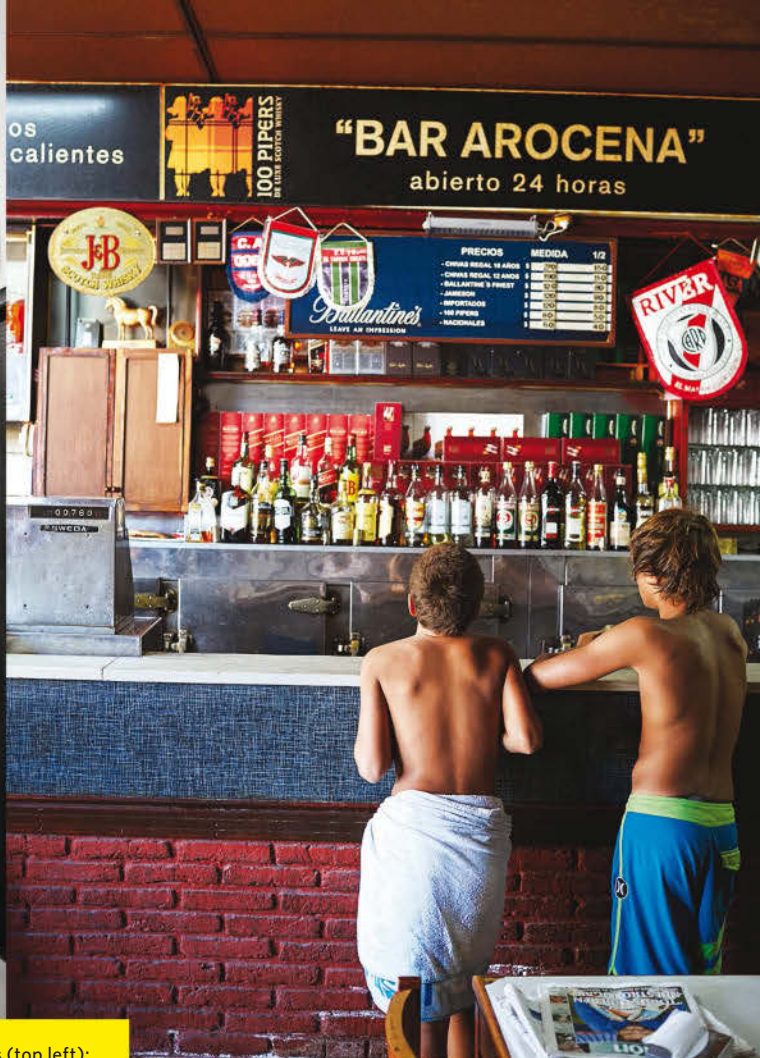
Fortified and properly oriented in the ways of the *chivito*, we have a general plan to make our way to the town of José Ignacio, on the southern coast. Over the last few decades, it has become South America's version of Montauk: a

— Chivito —

Chef Ignacio Mattos' version of a classic Uruguayan sandwich.

MAKES 1 SANDWICH; PHOTO ON PAGE 73

This hearty cheesesteak sandwich is served in restaurants and cafés throughout Uruguay. To make it, heat oven broiler. Heat 1 tbsp. canola oil in a 12" skillet over medium-high. Season a 1/4"-thick boneless strip loin steak with salt and pepper; cook, flipping once, until browned and cooked through, 3–4 minutes. Spread 2 tbsp. mayonnaise on insides of a sliced milk bun or kaiser roll; broil until lightly toasted, 1–2 minutes. Place 2 slices cooked bacon and a 1-oz. slice of fresh mozzarella over one half of roll; broil until cheese is melted, about 1 minute. Add reserved steak; top with a sliced hard-boiled egg, 2–3 pickled hot peppers, lettuce, and tomato. Serve with french fries, if you like.



First stop for Mattos (top left):
Montevideo's Bar Arocena (top
right), where the specialty is
the chivito, Uruguay's unofficial
national sandwich (bottom left).
Chef Gonzalo Zubiri (bottom right),
Mattos' childhood friend, gets to
work on a lunch at La Caracola.





Mattos enjoys dinner at Marismo restaurant with friends (above); in Mattos' signature style, sea bass crudo gets a blanket of turnips (right, see page 75 for recipe).

coastal village peppered with inns and resorts, popular mostly in the high season (Christmas to mid-February), where vacationers like to hang on the beach and throw the occasional party.

It's here that Mattos came into his own as a chef. In the late 1990s, before he ever dreamed of moving to the States, he worked summers in the kitchen of Los Negros, the restaurant of grilling luminary Francis Mallmann. And it's probably here that he picked up the nickname "Nacho."

"I need a shower," Carter says, breaking the silence as we get up to leave. He crumples the last of the napkins and tosses it onto the plate. We set off for the coast.

It takes about two and a half hours to get to where we're going. The green and arid motorway is populated by mini-malls and auto shops that suddenly give way to the blue and tropical scenes in and around the city of Punta del Este. Each village we pass gets smaller and beachier than the last, until finally we arrive at Posada Paradiso, in José Ignacio. It's exactly what you want from a low-key bohemian beach inn: 23 simply appointed rooms surrounding a pool. There's *mate* tea available at all hours of the day. And once night falls, there is complete silence.

It's late now, but Mattos assures us we needn't rush. "Around here, it's normal to sit down for dinner at 11 p.m.," he says. It takes all of what seems like two minutes to drive over to Marismo, a candlelit, open-air restaurant, for a laid-back feast. Almost everything, from the traditional *provoleta* (crisped provolone cheese with pickled vegetables) to the meltingly tender eggplant and lamb shank, is cooked over an open flame. As we'll find out during the course of the next few days, that's the way they like to do things here.

La Caracola is a chic day club about 10 minutes northeast of José Ignacio. It sits on a sliver of land flanked by lagoon and ocean, accessible only by a small dinghy across choppy waters. Normally the beach hut is packed with vacationing swimmers, but today it's closed, so Nacho has taken over the place.

What Mattos had described in his understated way as "cook a lunch for friends at the beach" turns out to be a more significant production. After being bounced around and drenched on the dinghy, Carter and I are greeted by waitresses arranging





Sea Bass Crudo

SERVES 4
COOK TIME: 10 MINUTES

Lime juice adds zing to this simple crudo. Assemble it right before serving, so the juice doesn't cook the fish. Mattos uses sea bass, but snapper also works well.

- 1½ lb. boneless, skinless sea bass, thinly sliced
- Kosher salt, to taste
- 1 red Holland chile, seeded and minced
- Zest of 1 lime, plus 3 tbsp. juice
- 1 medium white turnip, thinly sliced on a mandolin
- 1 small white onion, thinly sliced, soaked in ice water 10 minutes, drained
- ½ bunch cilantro sprigs, trimmed
- Extra-virgin olive oil, for drizzling

Arrange bass on a platter; season with salt. Sprinkle with chile, plus lime zest and half the juice. Toss remaining lime juice, the turnip, and onion in a bowl; sprinkle over fish. Garnish with cilantro sprigs and a drizzle of olive oil.

Peach and Plum Salad

SERVES 4-6; PHOTO ON PAGE 70
COOK TIME: 15 MINUTES

Red wine vinegar balances the sweetness of ripe fruit, while cilantro and basil add a floral note.

- 4 peaches, pitted and cut into 1" wedges
- 4 plums, pitted and cut into 1" wedges
- ¼ cup fresh lemon juice
- ¼ cup red wine vinegar
- 2 tsp. kosher salt, plus more to taste
- 1 small red onion, thinly sliced, soaked in ice water 10 minutes, drained
- 2 oz. baby arugula
- ⅓ cup basil leaves, torn
- ⅓ cup cilantro leaves
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- Extra-virgin olive oil, for drizzling

Toss peaches and plums with 2 tbsp. lemon juice and the vinegar in a bowl; transfer to a serving platter. Add remaining juice, 2 tsp. salt, and the onion to bowl; toss to combine. Using a slotted spoon, sprinkle onion mixture over fruit, leaving juice in bowl. Add arugula, basil, and cilantro to bowl. Season with salt and pepper, toss to combine, and scatter over fruit. Drizzle with olive oil and black pepper.



The club sits on a sliver of land flanked by lagoon and ocean, accessible only by dinghy

tables and bartenders fixing drinks. Toward the back, in the slender kitchen, Mattos is wearing all white and a floppy green hat that instantly brings to mind a cross between Pharrell and Chico Marx. His eyes are tearing up from the heat of the huge brick oven where he'll soon be roasting whole fish that are currently hanging on a wire at the entrance of the restaurant.

We are introduced to the supporting cast of cooks arranging the radiant *mise-en-place* for the affair. Fernando Aciar pours olive oil from three feet above a bowl, making mayonnaise like an Asturian pours cider. Gonzalo Zubiri grew up with Mattos: "He took me out of Santa Lucía when I didn't know what rosemary looked like and taught me how to work in a kitchen." Zubiri tells me this almost instantly, pausing from scaling fish to make sure I take note of the visiting chef's significance around here. Santiago Garat, a lanky man with the appearance of a Cuban revolutionary, tells me, "When I started organizing this lunch, people came out of the woodwork telling me they wanted to hang out with Nacho." As guests loosen up over caipirinhas, the chefs talk through the finishing touches of what they're going to serve. It's an improvisational process, a kind of informal reflection of how Mattos likes to work in New York. Today in José Ignacio, the main attraction is the black

corvina, sea bass, stuffed with lemon and herbs and roasted whole over a wood fire. There's also addictive crab toast, bright with the flavors of capers and chile; a bit of tomato-and-basil salad; and some citrusy *corvina cruda* that features Mattos' trademark use of thinly sliced vegetables—in this case turnips—layered on top of the fish, not just to add some bite, but also to give the diner a feeling of discovery. By the time we eat "lunch," it's nearing 6 p.m.

More than 40 people, friends and friends of friends, have descended on La Caracola. "When you're with Ignacio around these parts," Garat says, "there is no such thing as a small affair." After the food is cleared, almost everyone sticks around to drink Campari and nap.

The next day we drive inland to a 1930s cattle ranch, La Rinconada, lined with massive eucalyptus trees. Beams of sunlight poke through the foliage and horses roam freely throughout the grounds. There's a nice pool, as well as a trampoline for us to use just in case we're in the mood for jumping on it between meals (we are). Lunch today is for a smaller but still lively gathering of friends. Many familiar faces from La Caracola are gathered around the patio. In



Mattos, Carter, and friends take a dinghy ride to lunch at La Caracola one day (opposite), and devour a massive feast of short ribs, roasted vegetables, and a fresh salad at La Rinconada the next day (above, see page 80 for recipes).

We eat the food with our hands, and then everyone sticks around to drink Campari and nap

the outdoor kitchen, Mattos, Aciar, and Garat kick off the traditional South American grilling ritual, the *asado*. “You can smell firewood and smoke everywhere around this country,” Mattos says, applying slabs of *coronilla*, eucalyptus, and acacia wood to the hearth. The meats are to be cooked over the red embers raked to the right of the grill, with the logs burning into charcoal on the left side. This will allow the meat to cook slowly, but ensure it isn’t overwhelmed by the flavor of smoke.

The plan is at some point to sit around a table set out on the grass, but food starts coming to us as it’s ready. Sweetbreads are the first to arrive, crisp on the outside, perfectly smooth within. Mattos liberally administers lemon and salt to almost everything he’s making. The relentless assault continues with two types of blood sausage, chorizo, tri-tip, short ribs, and a decadent cut called the *araña*, from the rump, which we’re told the local butcher prepares only for select customers. “The meat is pleasantly fatty and full of character,” Mattos says. “It has that chewiness we love in Uruguay.”

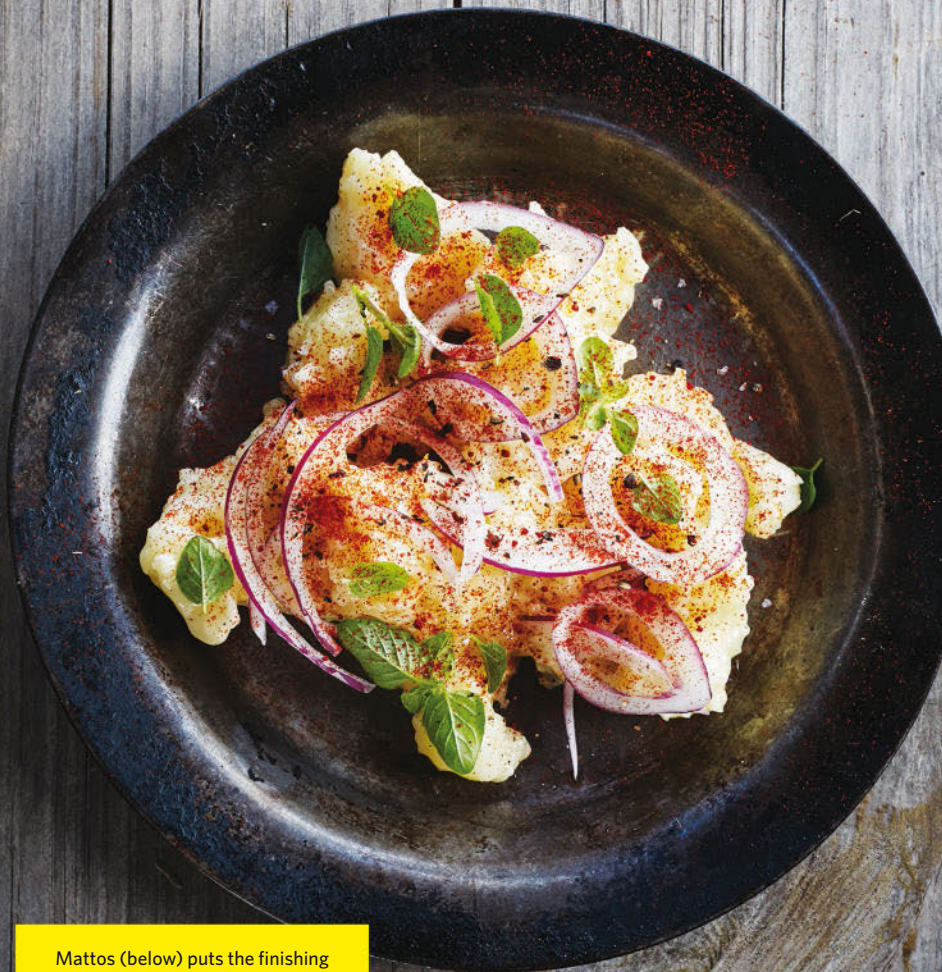
The only condiment you need for all of this is chimichurri, that iconic South American sauce made with oregano, garlic, olive oil, vinegar, and chile flakes. Garat has laid out flaky, freshly baked *galletas de campo* (savory biscuits whose name literally translates to “cracker from the woods”) so that we can fix ourselves small, open-faced sandwiches and dip into the juices.

The flavors today are heavier and certainly meatier than what Mattos champions in New York, but I can see the same purity and simplicity that form the foundation of his cooking at Estela. Carter suggests we make this trip every year. He’s got a bit of chimichurried bread between his fingers. “There’s a community in this place that’s just incredible,” he says. “You could talk to these people for hours.”

That’s exactly what we do after sitting around the long table on the lawn to finish off the Malbec and dig into the flan that Clo, the owner of the inn, has prepared for dessert.

Nacho is finally done cooking for the weekend and sits with us. He’s not usually given to nostalgia, but these reunion feasts have put him in a reflective mood. “When I started cooking in José Ignacio, I was questioning whether I wanted to work in kitchens for the rest of my life,” he says. “But I was embraced here in a way that triggered whatever it is my life has become.” Everyone seems sated, running their fingers around the rims of plates to get those last few bites of sweetness.





Ignacio Mattos' Potato Salad

SERVES 4-6
COOK TIME: 40 MINUTES

Boiling potatoes whole and unpeeled means they don't absorb too much water as they cook. Mixing them with an egg yolk and olive oil yields a rich dressing without the heavy creaminess of mayonnaise.

- 3 lb. Yukon gold potatoes
- 2 tsp. kosher salt, plus more to taste
- 2 1/2 tbsp. fresh lemon juice
 - 1 small red onion, thinly sliced, soaked in ice water 10 minutes, and drained
- 1/2 cup canola oil
- 1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 egg yolk
- 2 tbsp. marjoram leaves
- 1/4 tsp. sweet paprika

Boil potatoes in a 6-qt. saucepan of salted water. Reduce heat to medium-high; simmer until potatoes are tender, about 25 minutes. Drain potatoes and transfer to a bowl; when cool enough to handle, peel potatoes and coarsely mash. Toss 2 tsp. salt, the lemon juice, and onion in a separate bowl; set aside. Whisk oils and egg yolk in another bowl until combined; add to potatoes and toss to combine. Transfer potatoes to a serving platter and top with reserved onions; sprinkle with marjoram and paprika.

Whole Grilled Sea Bass

SERVES 4-6; PHOTO ON PAGE 78
COOK TIME: 20 MINUTES

Fish stuffed with loads of herbs and rubbed with a simple garlic butter are grilled whole, which leaves them with a smoky, charred flavor and tender meat.

- 4 1-lb. whole sea bass (or sea bream or red snapper), cleaned
- 2 tsp. crushed red chile flakes
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 3 lemons, sliced, plus more for serving
- 1 bunch each marjoram and thyme
- 4 tbsp. unsalted butter, softened
- 6 cloves garlic, minced

Heat a charcoal or woodburning grill or set a gas grill to medium-high. (Alternatively, heat a cast-iron grill pan over high.) Season cavity of fish with chile flakes, salt, and pepper; stuff with lemons and herbs. Mix butter and garlic in a bowl; rub over outside of fish; grill, flipping once, until slightly charred and cooked through, 12-15 minutes. Serve with more lemon.

Mattos (below) puts the finishing touches on his smashed potato salad (above), which accompanies whole grilled fish served by Martín Pittaluga (opposite), owner of La Caracola.





Crab Toast

SERVES 6-8
COOK TIME: 20 MINUTES

Spreading mayonnaise on both sides of the bread before grilling yields a perfectly golden brown crust.

- 1/2 cup mayonnaise
- 1 10-oz. loaf sourdough, sliced 1/2" thick and cut into thirds
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 12 oz. lump crabmeat
- 1/4 cup capers, rinsed
- 1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tsp. crushed red chile flakes
- Zest and juice of 2 lemons

Heat a charcoal or woodburning grill or set a gas grill to medium-high. (Alternatively, heat a cast-iron grill pan over high.) Spread mayonnaise on each side of bread and season with salt; grill, flipping once, until slightly charred and crisp, 4-5 minutes, and transfer to a serving platter. Stir crab, capers, olive oil, chile flakes, lemon zest and juice, salt, and pepper in a bowl; spoon crab salad over toast.

Tomato Salad with Green Beans and Basil

SERVES 6
COOK TIME: 15 MINUTES

Tearing the basil leaves for this simple salad releases their aroma while preventing the bruising that results from chopping.

- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 8 oz. green beans, trimmed
- 8 oz. romano beans, trimmed
- 1/4 cup red wine vinegar
- 3 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for drizzling
- Zest and juice of 2 lemons
- 4 medium heirloom tomatoes (2 sliced 1/4" thick, 2 cut into 1/2" wedges)
- 1 pint cherry tomatoes, halved lengthwise
- 1/2 cup basil leaves, preferably a mix of regular and Thai basil, torn

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil; cook green and romano beans until bright green and yellow, 1-2 minutes. Drain beans and transfer to a bowl of ice water until chilled. Drain beans and spread on paper towels to dry. Whisk vinegar, olive oil, lemon zest and juice, salt, and pepper in a bowl until combined; add reserved beans and the tomatoes and toss to combine. Arrange beans and tomatoes on a serving platter. Drizzle with olive oil; sprinkle with basil leaves, salt, and pepper.

Sweetbreads with Chimichurri Criollo

SERVES 4-6; PHOTO ON PAGE 81
COOK TIME: 1 HOUR

The key to these sweetbreads (see page 85 for how to clean) is an aggressive char—you want the outside to get super crispy.

- 1 tsp. kosher salt, plus more to taste
- 1/4 cup warm water
- 1/2 cup minced oregano
- 6 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 3 tbsp. red wine vinegar
- 1 tbsp. dried oregano
- 1 tsp. crushed red chile flakes
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 1/2 lb. sweetbreads, cleaned
- 2 tbsp. lemon juice, plus wedges

Dissolve 1 tsp. salt in warm water in a bowl. Stir in minced oregano, 4 tbsp. oil, the vinegar, dried oregano, chile flakes, and garlic; set chimichurri aside. Heat remaining oil in a 12" cast-iron skillet over medium; season sweetbreads with salt and cook, flipping once, until slightly charred and cooked through, 25-30 minutes; drizzle with lemon juice. Serve with reserved chimichurri and the lemon wedges.

Grilled Beef Ribs with Charred Vegetables

SERVES 4; PHOTO ON PAGE 77
COOK TIME: 3 HOURS

To cook these ribs indoors, brown them in a 12" cast-iron skillet and then roast them in a 350° oven until the meat is tender.

- 1 5-lb. rack beef short ribs
- Kosher salt and coarsely ground black pepper, to taste
- 5 small yellow onions
- 3 large red bell peppers
- 3 medium sweet potatoes
- 3 tbsp. olive oil
- 3 tbsp. red wine vinegar

1 Heat a charcoal or woodburning grill or set a gas grill to medium-high. Push coals to one side or turn off one burner on a gas grill to create an indirect grilling zone. Season ribs with salt and pepper; grill over direct heat, turning as needed, until slightly charred, 12-15 minutes. Transfer ribs to indirect heat and close lid; cook until meat is tender when pierced with a knife, 2 1/2-3 hours, or until an instant-read thermometer inserted in the thickest part of meat reads 130°, for medium-rare.

2 When ribs are almost cooked, bury vegetables in coals; cook until charred and cooked through, about 35 minutes for onions, 20 minutes for peppers, and 1 hour and 15 minutes for potatoes. To serve, peel and halve onions. Peel, seed, and slice peppers; transfer to a bowl and stir in oil, vinegar, salt, and pepper. Halve potatoes.





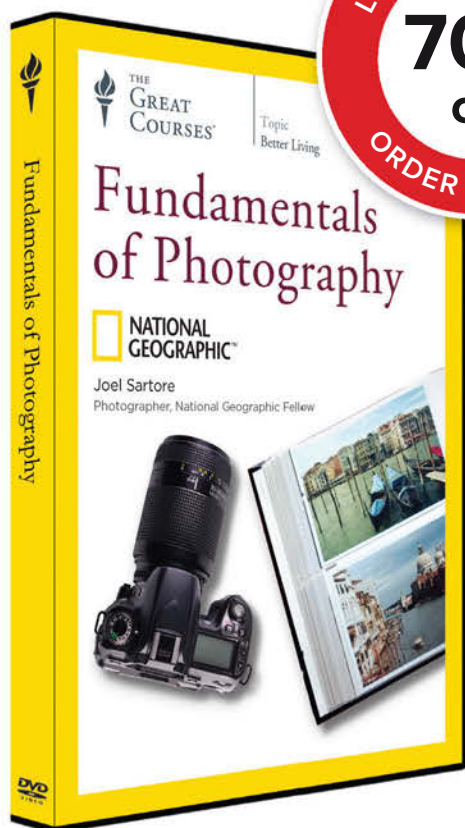
Mattos slicing char-grilled
sweetbreads at La Rinconada.



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• FROM THE SAVEUR •

TEST KITCHEN

For this issue, our test kitchen staff mastered the quick pickle, found the best way to brew iced coffee, and conquered sweetbreads

Make the Quickest Pickles Ever

With a couple of minutes and a handful of ingredients, you can make snappy pickles for sandwiches or a snack

I'm all about pickles, but I lack patience—a disappointing combination, particularly when it comes to our delicious homemade ones (see page 33 for recipe), which take 24 hours to pickle. That's why I'm a devoted quick-pickler. I've learned to make them myself with little more than sugar, salt, and the time it takes to put together a sandwich (like the ones in "Wich Hunt," page 28). For vegetables with high water content (radishes and cucumbers), toss 8 oz. thinly sliced vegetables with 2 tbsp. sugar and 1½ tsp. kosher salt. Ten minutes later, the moisture from the vegetables will create a natural brine. For vegetables with low water content and higher density (beets, carrots, and cauliflower), use a simple pour-over method: For one pound of paper-thin sliced vegetables, boil 1 cup each granulated sugar, vinegar (we prefer white or rice wine), and water along with 2 tbsp. kosher salt and toasted whole spices, such as coriander, cumin, and fennel. Pour over vegetables, let cool to room temperature, and voilà, the perfect quickle. —Farideh Sadeghin

MAY ISSUE
BY THE
NUMBERS

17,850

Total miles traveled to report "The Road to Abruzzo," page 48, "On the California Taco Trail," page 60, and "An Eating Adventure in Uruguay," page 70.

at least
800

Aromatic compounds in a cup of coffee, like the iced ones in "Brew for the Road," page 22.

33

Pints of strawberries the kitchen used for "Strawberry Rhubarb Revisited," page 44.



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Best Uses for Sugarcane

Fibrous stalks of this sweet grass are an unexpectedly versatile ingredient

During the couple of days it took to perfect the Zanzibari pressed sugarcane drink (see page 40 for recipe), I found myself coming across a lot of errant sugarcane lying around the test kitchen. So I started slicing it and chewing on it, which is certainly the easiest way to enjoy it. But here are some other fantastic uses: Steep it in tea; cut it into batons or thin sticks and use them as swizzle sticks for coffee or cocktails; or, my favorite, slice it into thick skewers. Use them with seafood, meat, or fruit—as the skewers cook, either on a grill or under a broiler, the heat will draw out a subtle sweetness. Sugarcane comes fresh (melissas.com), frozen and peeled, or canned in sweet syrup (khanapakana.com). —Kellie Evans



Instead of a wooden skewer, try using a sugarcane baton for a slightly sweeter take on grilled shrimp.



Why You Should Be Flash- Brewing

This clever technique will maximize the flavors of your iced coffee

For the most robust and nuanced cup of iced coffee, try “flash-brewing,” a method favored by Sam Penix, owner of Everyman Espresso in New York City. Superior to both the put-a-cup-of-hot-coffee-in-the-fridge method and cold-brewing, which involves steeping grounds in cold water, flash-brewing combines the best results of both hot and cold methods.

“Think of coffee as a basket, and you’re pulling different flavors out of it,” Penix says. “You need heat to extract acid from the beans, which is why cold-brew can taste very flat. With heat, you get a juicier, more complex cup.” But let that cup sit for a while, and those flavors will break down, leaving a stale taste.

The solution: Pour hot concentrated coffee over ice. For two cups, brew 10 oz. hot water with 1 oz. coffee grounds, then filter that over 7 oz. ice.

“As soon as the coffee hits the ice, the ice melts and you have a concentration that is fresh, cold, perfectly balanced,” says Penix.

MATT TAYLOR-GROSS



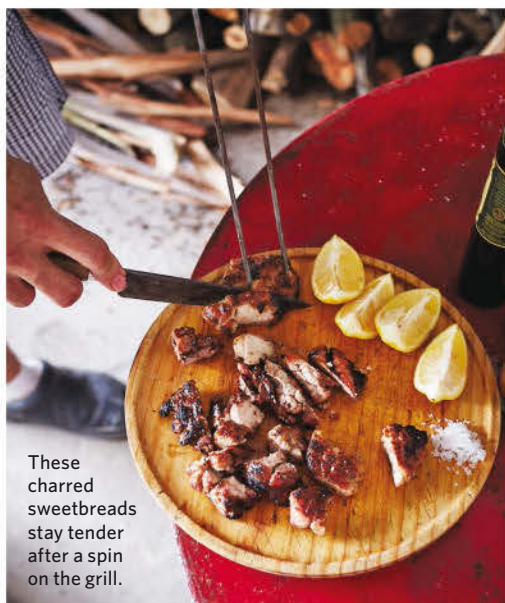
Dried Chiles: A Buying Guide

Not all dried chiles are made the same—make sure you know how to recognize the absolute best ones out there

The best dried chiles—like those the taco experts use in two recipes from “On the California Taco Trail” (Don Pepe’s chile de árbol salsa, page 68; and goat birria, page 64)—should add a vivid, potent flavor to dishes, not a musty, dulled one. Look for leathery-feeling chiles; they shouldn’t crack at the touch. Hunt for them in bulk bins at the grocery store instead of buying prepackaged bags—there’s no telling how long those have been on the shelf—and store them in an airtight container for up to three months.

The Expert Way to Handle Sweetbreads

Don’t be intimidated by this fantastic, underutilized protein



These charred sweetbreads stay tender after a spin on the grill.

Sweetbreads, the name for a calf or lamb’s pancreas (near the stomach) or thymus gland (in the throat), are the kind of intimidating ingredient that many home cooks avoid on principle. A thanks-but-no-thanks, I’m-adventurous-but-not-that-adventurous kind of thing. But if you can get over the ew factor, sweetbreads are versatile: They’re easily fried, roasted, braised, sautéed, or grilled, like the sweetbreads with chimichurri criollo (see page 80 for recipe). They are also, blessedly, nearly impossible to overcook. The only trick is to make sure you clean them thoroughly, which means peeling off the membrane (the viscous sheath that surrounds the meat): After you rinse them to remove any traces of blood, boil for five minutes and then shock in an ice bath. This will help the membrane firm up and make it easier to peel.

—Farideh Sadeghin

SAVEUR (ISSN 1075-7864) Issue: No. 174, May 2015. SAVEUR is published nine times a year (January/February, March, April, May, June/July, August/September, October, November, and December) by Bonnier Corporation, 460 N. Orlando Ave., Suite 200, Winter Park, FL 32789. Copyright 2015, all rights reserved. The contents of this publication may not be reproduced in whole or in part without consent of the copyright owner. Periodicals postage paid at Winter Park, Fla., and additional mailing offices. SUBSCRIPTIONS: U.S., \$29.95 for one year, \$49.95 for two years. Foreign surface mail to Canada: \$42.95 for one year; to other foreign destinations: \$55.95. For subscription information in the U.S., call 877-717-8925, outside the U.S., call 515-237-3697, email SAVcustserv@cdsfulfillment.com, or write to SAVEUR, P.O. Box 6364, Harlan, IA 51593. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to SAVEUR, P.O. Box 6364, Harlan, IA 51593. For faster service, please enclose your current subscription label. **EDITORIAL:** Send correspondence to Editorial Department, SAVEUR, 15 East 32nd Street, 12th Floor, New York, NY 10016; email: edit@saveur.com. We welcome all editorial submissions but assume no responsibility for the loss or damage of unsolicited material. Retail sales discounts are available; contact Circulation Department. The following are trademarks of SAVEUR and Bonnier Corporation, and their use by others is strictly prohibited: IN THE SAVEUR KITCHEN, SAVEUR FARE, SAVEUR MOMENT



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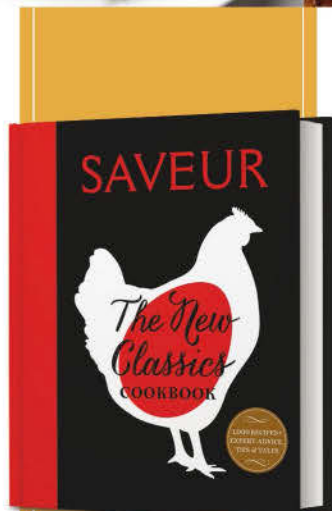
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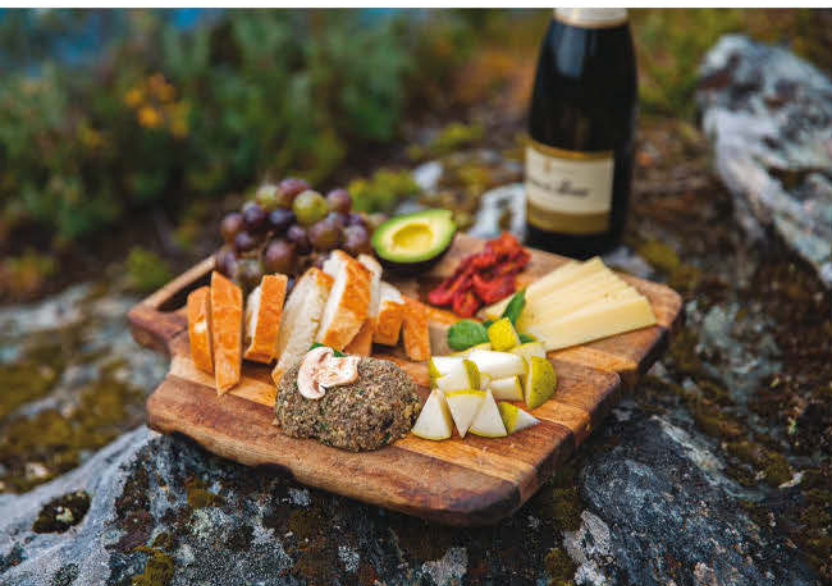
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STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY ADAM AND EMILY HARTEAU

After 849 days, 30,699 miles, 23 border crossings, 14 countries, and the birth of our second daughter, we finally reached the literal end of the road in Argentina's Lapataia Bay, outside Ushuaia, the southernmost city in the world. We had started in California, with our trusty 1990 VW Westfalia van, and had initially planned to travel for only a year. But the rewards of slow travel are awesome—we loved being able to follow any intriguing dirt road we wanted to explore. Sure, the motor fell out four times and we spent more hours than we would have liked camping in greasy junkyards, waiting for the van to be repaired. But it was our home, and without it, it wasn't much of a road trip, was it? When we reached this spot, we simply could not go farther south, so we decided to celebrate. Emily made a mushroom pâté and laid it out with some beautiful cheeses and local bread. We sat there eating, swishing everything back with a cold bottle of Argentine bubbly—even though it was only 11:30 a.m.—looking over this glorious bay where the last of the Americas fades into the waters. We made a little toast, to us, our daughters, the road that brought us here—and our car's working engine.

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